



THE EX-SOLDIER

BY HIMSELF

PEEPS AT THE BRITISH ARMY

By W. G. CLIFFORD

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THE EX-SOLDIER BY HIMSELF

A PRACTICAL STUDY OF THE PAST AND
FUTURE OF THE EX-SOLDIER PROBLEM
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
SITUATION CREATED BY THE
WORLD WAR

BY

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DEDICATED
TO
THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

HAVING regard to the attention the ex-soldier problem is receiving on account of the world war, I feel that the voice of the men ought to be heard on the subject. Therefore, I have written this book in the hope that it may lead to the consideration of certain points which might otherwise be overlooked in the rush of reports and ideas which obtain publicity almost every day.

WOKING, *April* 1916.

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THE EX-SOLDIER

CHAPTER I

TWO PICTURES

“SOLDIERS! your labours, your privations, your sufferings, and your valour will never be forgotten by a grateful country.”

Thus spake Havelock to the magnificent troops who saved India for us, and earned for their general a military reputation of the first order; to say nothing of a rather commonplace statue in Trafalgar Square.

Havelock was an officer and a gentleman if ever there was one; his oratory need not be discounted. Soldier-like, he meant what he said, but it is to be feared that he gave a draft on “a grateful country” which was not met honourably enough to save many of his heroes from want in the evening of their lives. Thus far, his eloquence carried him away from facts he could not foresee, but his phrase will live, if only because his use of

the word "Soldiers!" provides one of the rare examples in our language fit to compare with the witchery of the word when the Little Corporal declaimed it, so often and so supremely well, at the head of the glorious armies of Imperial France.

Perhaps this is why Havelock's phrase does its best to redeem his statue, on the base of which it is inscribed. Be this as it may, I can aver that one chill afternoon in early autumn I saw a man approach the graven image of Havelock. He looked at the bronze as he might have looked at a factory chimney, and his eyes fell until they rested at last on that inscription at the base of the monument. The man gazed at the glowing words with that "Eyes front!" expression which stamped the old type of ex-soldier beyond the possibility of mistake, shrugged his shoulders as if shifting a pack just before the end of a punishing route march, and, taking his full time, he seemed to dwell on each word as if spelling it letter by letter. When he had quite finished, he said, as his cold right hand bent blue over an empty pipe:

"Grateful country! Yus, I don't fink!"

Then he squared himself, straightened himself up into a passing glimpse of the man he used to be, and marched away to face the world again, with a bedraggled fringe round

the bottom of his trousers, with boots that were, a coat that had been, a cap which never was anything but shoddy, and a pessimism which not even the pulsating words of Havelock could lift for a moment.

The other side of the picture? Oh yes, I have it before me in colours. It forms the outside back cover of a past edition of that well-known military classic, *The Advantages of the Army*. There, under the official heading, “Employment on Return to Civil Life,” I see a group of policemen, postmen, messengers, firemen, warders, beefeaters, and others, including a gent. under a top hat whom I have never been able to classify at all well. Each and every one of them appears amazingly prosperous, well fed, happy, and with faces glowing with the crude reds of cheap colour printing. They are a cheery, sociable throng. The policeman, comfortably complacent, is shaking hands with a gorgeous beefeater, the postman is apparently reading a tasty postcard to a pal in the Commissionaires, while the others are posed around in advertorial array with a mounted contingent of one on their left flank. It is indeed a picture which tells its own story; it says, as plainly as utter oblivion to artistic restraint can shout from the page, “Join the Army, and when your soldiering is done you can be one of us—it’s

part of the official 'Advantages of the Army,' you know."

This pretty picture held a prominent place among our recruiting attractions for very many years, and stayed so long that the copy I have before me bears the imprint "E.R." Unfortunately, however, the picture failed to fit the facts; it was a study in what ought to have been, an inartistic groping towards an ideal which was never realised to any appreciable extent, and it was dropped when the recruiting authorities decided to abide by their own regulations.

The regulation which occasioned this decision is worth quoting. It reads: "All recruiting is to be carried on in an open manner, like any other agreement between the employer and the person engaging to serve. No misrepresentations are to be made use of to induce recruits to enlist, and all enlistments are to be conducted strictly in accordance with Section 80 of the Army Act."

I cannot say when the above regulation first made its appearance, but I do know that a time came when the powers that be discovered grave incompatibility of temperament between the regulation and the picture which depicted the ex-soldier in a rosy rapture of lucrative civil employment. Honesty prevailed. The picture was placed on the

official *Index Expurgatorius*, and from that time the prospect of employment on return to civil life has not been over-paraded as a recruiting attraction. This was but right. The truth, as regards State-provided uniformed billets, was, as Sir Ian Hamilton wrote in his *Compulsory Service* : "The far-away chance of a pretty hard job as a postman, which is as much as Thomas Atkins can expect to get from the State."

Regarding the value of other avenues for the employment of ex-soldiers, I know no more caustic comment than the following facts from the Report of the Commission on the Poor Law, issued in 1909 : "It is the men who have left the permanent situation afforded by the Army, and who, after more or less interval, have abandoned hope of getting employment of permanent character, who furnish the largest contingent of the floating population of the casual wards. What they aim at is to get permanent situations 'of trust,' as it is called ; as caretakers, bailiffs, gate-keepers, grooms, valets, chauffeurs, porters, clerks, etc., or as members of the Corps of Commissionaires. But only a minority of them secure such places. The others mostly sink gradually to the 'casual' class. Out of 1512 men who passed through the casual ward of a rural workhouse in the

West of England in 1905, no fewer than **333** convinced the Master that they had served in the Army. Similarly, in the Church Army Homes, many of the men helped are ex-soldiers. In 1907, out of 1856 admitted to London homes, 302 were ex-soldiers, 16·3 per cent.; and 22 per cent. of the men who passed through the Provincial homes had been in military service.”

CHAPTER II

THE MEN WHO WAIT

I QUITE expect to be told that I have been raking over the embers of a dead fire, that the whole of my preceding chapter is merely of historical interest, that the facts therein mentioned belong to a discredited past, and that nothing remotely resembling them can ever occur again. It will be granted me that the old type of ex-soldier deserved better of his country than the fate which was too often his, and it will also be impressed on me that the men who have made up by far the greatest army the British Empire has ever seen will most assuredly never be subjected to similar treatment.

May I ask why ?

There are weighty answers to my question. The personnel of the mighty hosts who have transformed Great Britain into a first-class military power differs intrinsically from the stamp of men who filled the ranks of the old Regular Army before the war. It is the

nation in arms to an extent we have never seen since the days of feudalism, all classes are represented as they never have been before during the history of our standing army, and these men are not of the type to suffer quietly the scandalous usage meted out to ex-soldiers of the past. Numbers also demand consideration. We are dealing with millions, not thousands, and, surely, the bad old order of things will be broken down by sheer weight of numbers? It is not difficult to reason along these lines until we arrive perilously near the comforting fallacy that the ex-soldiers of the immediate future can work out their own economic salvation if left to themselves; that their inherent abilities, backed by the power of numbers, will give them momentum enough to take the gap between military and civil life with scarcely an effort.

On the other hand, it is at least arguable to urge that the very immensity of the question will result in an alarming increase in the worst aspects of the familiar ex-soldier problem, and it is certain that the problem is complicated by one new factor of sombre significance; namely, the presence of very large numbers of wounded and disabled men whose physical condition aggravates the normal difficulties met with when placing men on the labour market, and whose pensions will not

suffice to render them independent of work, especially if they have wives and families or other dependants.

The generalisms outlined in the foregoing paragraphs are necessarily adumbrative to a fault, and can only be justified because they help us to regard details with some idea of the proportion of the whole. Even our details are by no means sharp and clear, for who can say with exactitude what manner of men are these who will be waiting in their millions for a return to civil life? Nevertheless, it is possible to arrive at an approximation of illustrative value, which I will endeavour to compute.

To begin with, we know that, apart from the tens of thousands who have served in the officer class, some really wealthy men have been content to enlist and "do their bit" in the ranks. Their future is assured; they will return to the life they led before they donned khaki, and good luck to them—may the super-tax rest lightly on their banking accounts.

Next, we have appreciable numbers of men who belong to the upper middle classes, and who for a variety of reasons have gone through the military mill without the commissions which fell to the lot of the majority of their class. These excellent fellows are well enough endowed with this world's goods to "carry

on" comfortably on their return to civil life, and, once again, good luck to them—may their dividends never grow less.

Immediately below this mere garnishing of independent people, we strike a substantial strata of those middle-class youngsters who have but limited capital, which has often been invested in an education fitting them for one of the professions. Possibly, the commissioned grades have absorbed the majority of this class now serving, but, especially in some crack corps, the proportion in the ranks is considerable. I cannot digress into the ex-officer problem certain to confront us, that is a question which demands a book of its own, but so far as the rank and file are represented in the class now under discussion, I wish I could think they will all stumble on their feet without hardship. They may not starve, but many of them will require a helping hand to enable them to pick up careers they dropped when they heard the call to arms, and it will be a grave scandal if this "bitter cry of the middle classes" falls on the ears of a deaf nation. The same may be said of another and larger section of the middle classes, sons of prosperous tradesmen, farmers, managers, and the like. These young men have among them their full share of the best blood and brains in the country, and their case must be

handled with generous tact unless we wish appreciable quantities of this priceless human material to degenerate into one of the waste by-products of the war. One thing cannot be insisted upon too strongly or too often—these men are far too proud and stiff-lipped to crave for favours, they cannot be helped by the rote and rut of stereotyped officialdom in any shape or form, and this class alone presents a problem of infinite complexity and delicacy, which must be handled with supreme skill and fine feeling, or it is best left alone, even if such neglect strikes a shrewd blow at the vital interests of a class which lies near indeed to the spinal marrow of the backbone of the country.

We now come to a more numerous class, the many small business men of the type who “shut up shop” and enlisted, together with agents and others who ran various little enterprises practically on their own account. There are more of these self-contained men in the ranks than might be supposed, and although I hope most of them will find their little niches vacant when they go back, yet common sense compels the conclusion that in many cases the break with their former mode of life will be final and complete. Changed circumstances, quite beyond their control, will drive many of them to seek a fresh outlet for

their energies and abilities, and although we have the consolation of knowing that the adaptability of this class is one of its strongest points, yet it by no means follows that the percentage of economic casualties will not be high if these men are permitted to drift. Some idea of the numbers in this class can be gained from the following press cutting: "An interesting fact is revealed in Kelly's *Post Office London Directory for 1916*, which has just been issued. An examination of a number of streets in the more distant parts of the metropolitan area shows that a considerable number of small tradesmen have, during the past year, given up business. In some cases the percentage proves to be no less than twenty per cent. As there has been no increase in the number of bankruptcy or liquidation cases, it is probable that the large number of small tradesmen who have joined the Army is mainly responsible for the decrease."

Our next class, which I find difficult to define, is, broadly speaking, made up of skilled workers who are largely outside the trade-union movement. Men in subordinate positions connected with the professions, certain grades of clerical workers, men who fill a multitude of berths in shops and business houses in normal times, and a bewildering

variety of employees in the journalistic, publishing, theatre, and film worlds; many of whom are specialists to their finger-tips in a small way, and next to impossible to adapt to another calling. All these go to the making of the class I have in mind, which includes other men, plenty of them, who, in the space at my disposal, defy me to group them under their means of obtaining a living. Upon the whole, every section of this class earned good wages before they enlisted, but after the war their position will often be one of serious uncertainty, to say the best of it; and unless their peculiar requirements are studied with sympathetic care, it needs no seer to predict that many of them will feel the pinch acutely, and pay a price for their patriotism the nation should be ashamed to exact.

Workers on the land must not be overlooked. This class is not so largely represented to-day as it was during the Napoleonic and Crimean periods, when the bulk of our recruits, and very possibly the best of them, were taken from "the tail of the plough." The future of these men gives no particular cause for anxiety provided they go "back to the land"—but will they? As far as my experience and observation goes, the life of a soldier appears to unsettle agricultural labourers and the like to a greater extent than it does men drawn

from other sections of the community. It may be, of course, that this is only true as regards peace soldiering, and that men will be glad to return to the countryside when the war is over. I hope so, but I cannot help thinking that the tendency to drift into big towns in search of more remunerative work will be very pronounced, and I am sure that the attractions, both superficial and real, of life in towns will provide another and even more powerful magnet which will tend to draw these men away from their pre-military occupations. The only remedy is to provide effective counter-attractions on the land, and to educate the men up to a proper appreciation of the unreality and hollowness of many things which pass for "life" in our cities and towns.

We now come to the bulk of the men—the miners, railway workers, engineers, cotton operatives, and other trade unionists—who joined up so magnificently in their hundreds of thousands. These men present a problem much too serious and complicated to be more than glanced at here, but we may rest assured that, upon the whole, whatever their fate may be, their return to civil life will not bring them into contact with the starvation aspects of the pre-world war ex-soldier problem. Generally speaking, the same may be said of other craftsmen and artisans of all types, who may not

happen to be trade unionists, but are entitled to a place, sometimes pride of place, among our skilled workers. Their future is fairly clear, but their inclusion brings us to the last of those who may fairly be placed in a great wide division by themselves, set apart as men who, in the vast majority of cases, would never have enlisted but for the war. And, with certain reservations, not very material, I am willing and thankful to admit that this fine body of men will never join the legions of the lost, will never make fresh armies to rot in that nether world in which so many ex-soldiers of past generations have languished and suffered; suffered so much that at times they have cast an envious thought back to those whom, in the old days, they left in a shallow trench, dead, killed in battle by a foe more humane in his slaying than a mercenary and merciless world which vivisects the bottom dog and pens sociological reports with his life blood.

CHAPTER III

WITHIN THE DANGER ZONE

HAVING dealt with those men who are not true to type when we speak of the ordinary ex-soldier in an economic sense, we may come to terms with the optimist by placing these men outside the danger zone when considered in the aggregate, and conclude that so far as they are concerned there is no great likelihood of much disgraceful history repeating itself. It would be well indeed if any process of reasoning enabled us to predict a similar fate for the others.

Who are these 'others'? Youths stranded in "blind alley" occupations, tradeless men, restless spirits filled with a love of an exciting life; with more than a sprinkling of born soldiers, the soldier ants of our industrial heap, who too often evince a fine contempt for those mundane matters which make all the difference between living and existing in ordinary life; and are all too seldom equipped with those technical qualifications which com-

mand their price in the market-place. Others could be added to the list, but, in short, we may say that the present class comprises those who in normal times form the bulk of our recruits for the Regular Army, and in due course present the familiar ex-soldier problem. They also make soldiers second to none in the world, never forget that, for of such were the men of that "contemptible little army" which made military history fit to compare with the most resplendent pages of Napier.

The war swept the country bare of these men, and although many of them have gone beyond the ken of we mortals, yet there must be hundreds of thousands of them whose turn will come for that return to civil life which found their immediate predecessors furnishing "the largest contingent of the floating population of the casual wards." When they put on their mufti, what is the essential difference between them and the ex-soldiers of yesterday, whose condition was too often so deplorable?

The Insurance Act, if it stands the strain, may, if the worst comes to the worst, provide a partial and transient palliative, but it offers no real remedy, no permanent panacea; for how can legislation, however wise and beneficent, devised to meet the incidence of normal unemployment, cope with the chronic condition of a class which, some seven years after the

end of our last war, loomed so large in the Report of the Commission on the Poor Law ? I hold no brief either for or against the Insurance Act, but I know that, in relation to the ex-soldier problem, it is but one of many means by which we can hope to effect the desired end, and that it can only act as a valuable preventative if administered in conjunction with the specialised work of those who are grappling with the employment of the typical ex-soldier. Otherwise, the Act, however well meant, may so degenerate in its effect on the men as to create a species of semi-demoralisation in certain cases, when, of course, the last state of the men concerned will be a good deal worse than if the Act had never been passed.

Furthermore, it is by no means certain that the Insurance Act will apply to every man included in the class now under review ; there is sure to be a minority outside its scope. Upon the whole, however, the Act should do an immense amount of good if we only recognise its limitations ; the danger is that too much may be expected of it, that it may form the main ingredient in the soothing syrup sure to be offered to the public by those who never have, and never will, come to real grips with the ex-soldier problem. I have dealt with the Insurance Act in this portion of my book because

it is the one new remedial factor of any importance in the problem now before us, the one thing which has not been tried and found more or less wanting, and it is highly essential to take an early view of its potentialities, both for good and evil.

Before quitting the class of ex-soldiers within the danger zone, we must allow for its substantial reinforcement by a steady dribble of surplus men that the attrition of industrial and commercial life is sure to wear away from classes which, as a whole, are clear of the danger zone. Another reinforcement, and a significant one, will come from those who, although nominally enlisted as tradesmen, were so young and inexperienced that, after soldiering until the war is over, their modicum of technical knowledge and manual dexterity will be atrophied to an extent rendering them indistinguishable from unskilled workers. And once again I must ask what is there to prevent this reinforced army of ex-soldiers from drifting into the gutter to a disgraceful extent as years go by? Remember, we must take long views when we face this question; the Report of the Commission on the Poor Law is conclusive on *that* point.

The advent of compulsory service does not affect the phase of the problem now under

consideration. Conscription will merely take its proportion of men from all the classes already dealt with, and in due course they will return the same as the others. Personally, speaking as an old soldier who enlisted and "did his bit" years ago, I have no sympathy with those eligibles who waited until they were fetched. But it is mere nonsense to talk of penalising them for the remainder of their lives because they kept out of khaki until they were forced into it. When peace comes, they and theirs must live, that's the vital point, and who is mad enough to wish to perpetuate a class war between those who enlisted and those who waited for the spur of compulsion? What sort of nation shall we be if we have a vendetta of this kind embittering our lives for years and years, perhaps passing even from generation to generation? Surely it is infinitely preferable to be charitable enough to conclude that for reasons of their own, good and sufficient unto themselves, the "fetch me's" deemed it their duty to wait until military service became obligatory? This is no time for sentimental resentment, in fact, as regards the ex-soldier problem as a whole, the farther we get away from sentiment the better it will be for all of us.

Sentiment does not count. It has never saved the men who fought our past wars, and

it will not save those who have fought in this. The real value of sentiment is admirably expressed in that bitter old verse, handed down by word of mouth through generations of our soldiers :

“ God and the soldier all men adore,
In time of trouble and of war.
When war is over, and all things righted,
God is forgotten and the old soldier slighted.”

If, however, we take a practical, instead of a poetical view, it is easy to understand why sentiment is powerless to help when we have to deal with the continual requirements of large bodies of men who must work to live. With the best heart and intentions in the world an employer dare not manufacture artificial openings for appreciable numbers of unsuitable men, simply because they have fought for their country. The inexorable law of values cannot be disregarded in this manner, especially in these days of cosmopolitan competition for the trade of the world ; and we may say at once that after the first gush of pseudo-enthusiasm for the indiscriminate employment of war heroes has passed, normal conditions will prevail again, and men will be paid and employed strictly in accordance with the matter-of-fact requirements of the labour market, without, save in a few scattered instances, the smallest preferential regard on

account of their military service. This seems hard, but it must be so when the number of men is considered ; and it's not the slightest use raving about it. No amount of sentimental feeling, however generous and praiseworthy, can or ought to saddle our industries, year in and year out, with the dead weight of multitudes of men who are not really useful and necessary, but who are retained in semi-sinecures because they hammered the Huns. Such an abnormality cannot be anticipated for a moment. We must face facts, and the facts are that we have immediately before us a sure and menacing prospect of an aggravated enlargement of the pre-world-war ex-soldier problem, unless we tackle the question as Britons should, and for once in our national history make adequate preparations calculated to turn a menace into an opportunity to redeem a past full of discreditable failure.

What is the nature of the problem ? Taking the broadest view, it is at bottom almost entirely a matter of supply and demand. Men leave the Army, as leave they must, sooner or later, and those in the danger zone are at once extremely liable to discover with a shock that they are both unemployed and unemployable. They have nothing to commend them to an employer who has no use for unskilled workers, or " misfit " skilled

workers, whose trade does not want them, and they soon feel the handicap of a condition which is well-nigh hopeless in these days of complicated machinery and specialisation in every important division of industry. Their only chance is to fit in where their health and strength and willingness to "do anything" suit the requirements of a particular employer, and it is to be feared that this chance is frequently so remote and difficult to locate that the individual is apt to become submerged before he can strike it. These men constitute the real problem we have to deal with; those outside the danger zone only demand such guidance and help as may be necessary to prevent them from drifting into it,—an important point, but subsidiary to the main issue, which is the employment of the hundreds of thousands of ex-soldiers who cannot be absorbed by the skilled labour market. These men have always provided the crux of the ex-soldier problem; they will soon be with us again in vastly increased numbers, and—I must rub it in once more—what right has any sentimental optimist to conclude that the end of the world war will find this problem solving itself? It will do nothing of the kind; the job before us is plain—we must do our level best to bring the means of life within the reach of every ex-soldier who is willing to work for his

living. It can be done, it must be done, and most assuredly will be done if we make up our minds to do it, and, most important of all, acknowledge, to our national shame, that we have never done it at all well during the past.

CHAPTER IV

THE EX-SOLDIER'S RIGHTS IN EQUITY

WHAT are the causes of past failure? Why has the nation failed to cope with the ex-soldier problem? These questions must be answered before any reforms can be outlined, and answered in no perfunctory manner. We cannot allow the past to bury the past, because there are so many indications that unless a clean sweep is made the past will repeat itself. All the materials for a continuance of the bad old order of things lie ready to hand, and are regarded by the general public as reliable means of meeting the special needs of the ex-soldier. This dangerous misapprehension must be removed. The public must be told the truth, even if the telling entails a prolonged and critical examination of many things officialdom would far rather forget; for unless the man in the street knows how and why the scandals of the past came into being, he will lack that grasp of the subject which alone can enable him to insist upon reform.

But before we examine the confused and faulty machinery which has wrecked the lives of tens of thousands of ex-soldiers during the past, we must first establish the underlying principle which should animate all work on behalf of ex-service men. This brings us to the equity of the position. What just claim has the ex-soldier on the remainder of the community? Our Regular Army is a professional one, our present Army is both professional and national, a circumstance unique in the military history of the world. We pay our soldiers, feed them, clothe them, pension them for long service or disablement, and I have heard it contended by extremists that on the termination of his military contract the soldier has no further claim on us. But this view of the matter is not true, not equity, not common fair play between man and man. There is a clause in the soldier's contract, which he accepts cheerfully, which pledges him to risk that which is beyond all price, and, surely, I quit not the domain of strict equity when I claim that the men who face this risk are entitled as an absolute right to whatever may be necessary to enable them to earn their daily bread when their soldiering is a thing of the past? Furthermore, my claim is buttressed to the point of complete impregnability by the fact that, in addition to the risk I have men-

tioned, every soldier faces the *certainty* that his military training compels him to lose touch with civil life, and, to an extent which varies greatly in individuals, is more or less unfitting him for the normal duties of his civilian calling. Taken together, the risk and the certainty make a claim, the justice of which cannot be seriously disputed. It is, however, most essential to keep this claim rigidly within the scope of the strictest equity. My whole case for the ex-soldier is based on what he may fairly claim as a right, not what he may crave as a favour. Obviously, he cannot be exhibited as a species of war trophy for the remainder of his natural life, and supported in ornamental idleness until what is left of him demands the services of a funeral party and a chaplain. Nor can he be treated as a pampered darling of industrialism, who is to be spoon-fed at regular intervals by altruistic employers. But I have sometimes heard the cause of the ex-soldier championed as if things like these were the least he could expect from a "grateful country," and more harm than enough has been done in this way by good folk who have allowed their hearts to run away with their heads. The truth is that the ex-soldier neither expects nor desires to have his bread buttered on both sides and crammed down his throat at meal-times, but he has an unqualified right to

a fighting chance in life as we live it. That is all I ask for the class to which I am proud to belong. I crave no favours, scorn all charity, and boldly demand for the ex-soldier nothing more or less than his bare rights in equity.

He has never had them. The equitable aspect of the ex-soldier problem has been consistently slurred over for centuries, and, in spite of many superficial appearances to the contrary, I feel convinced that this slurring is not primarily due to a desire on the part of the nation to evade its responsibilities towards those who have filled the ranks of its armies. On the contrary, the nation, as represented by the House of Commons, has officially admitted the ex-soldier's right to everything I ask for him ; for, in 1895, a Select Committee reported that "the State contracts towards these men a moral obligation which it should not hesitate to discharge." No, the nation as a whole is not to blame. The real cause of the trouble is that, except so far as pensions go, and they do not go nearly so far as they ought, every wrong method of meeting the national responsibility towards the ex-soldier has been exploited with amazing effrontery in spite of an appalling record of fiasco and failure.

This is a sweeping assertion. The fastidious critic may sniff at it as "strong," but I propose to justify it to the hilt by reviewing what has

been done for the ex-soldier during the past, and at the same time I shall endeavour to point out the "reason why" of past failures, so that we may know what to avoid when at last an effort worthy of the name is made to cope with the ex-soldier problem.

But before turning to the history of the subject, it is necessary to consider the equity of the position so far as it concerns those who may have been compelled to serve in the ranks. Much might be written on this point, and some decidedly heated arguments could be put forward to show that these men will not be the same as other ex-soldiers. But when we get rid of the "hot air," and look at the matter calmly in a frame of mind attuned to the proper consideration of a point in equity, we find that because a man is compelled to perform a contract it is wrong and unjust to assume that any clause in that contract is thereby prejudiced to his detriment. If a man pays his blood tax "by order" instead of "by request" that does not alter the fact that he pays it, and is entitled to whatever rebate may be payable in kind to every ex-soldier. If we quibble about this, if we attempt to differentiate between those who enlisted and those who were conscripted, we shall only reap a harvest of discord and hate which will steep the aftermath of the war in

wormwood and gall. Is this worth while? Is it not far better to remember that unity is just as essential when clearing up after the war as it is while we are fighting it?

I am now free to deal with the history of my subject, and as far as my research takes me, the first thing we ever did for our old soldiers was to grant "beggars' licences" to men "broke in our wars," thus enabling them to beg their bread from door to door without fear of the parish constable. But this was a very long time ago, and is not quite such cynical neglect as it appears to be at first sight. Begging at that period was evidently a profession which had a legal status of sorts, and it appears that these "licences" were reserved for disabled men, whose sad condition may well have excited sufficient compassion to enable them to pick up enough to keep body and soul together. This was degrading, of course, but it was better than starvation, and for what it is worth we may place it on record as the first reward a "grateful country" gave to those who fought and bled for it. Generally speaking, however, I am inclined to say that as regards sound men there was no ex-soldier problem in those days. The times were more primitive, there was a far greater demand for unskilled labour, and it appears highly probable that the men of disbanded regiments

were soon absorbed when a campaign was finished.

These disbanded men, it must be pointed out, would be practically the only ex-soldiers sound in wind and limb who returned to civil life. In the old days men enlisted for life and usually died in the Service. It was not for nothing that at that time the relations and friends of a recruit mourned him as dead; the mortality was positively ghastly among our troops on peace service beyond the seas. Fortescue, the most accurate historian the British Army has ever had, writes thus of the ravages of yellow fever among our eighteenth-century soldiers: "In three days—think of this appalling visitation—in three days the effective men had sunk from sixty-six hundred to thirty-two hundred; and in ten days more only a thousand were fit to be landed against an enemy." Thus, in less than a fortnight, we lost five thousand six hundred men out of a total of six thousand six hundred, and how far these figures were exceptional may be judged by a further quotation from the same author, where, in the West Indies alone, he says: "A searching inquirer will turn his steps to the desolate graveyards, and tearing his way through rank herbage and tropical scrub will approach the crumbling headstones, and there he may read—or at least I could

read thirty years ago—what a visitation of yellow fever meant in the old days. Field-officers, captains, lieutenants, ensigns, sergeants, corporals, drummers, rank and file of battalion after battalion lie there in row upon row, as if on parade, while the land-crabs hurry from grave to grave, and deadly snakes lie coiled upon heaps of crumbling stones which were once monuments. I know no more melancholy sight than this. How many British soldiers and sailors lie in these and other unknown graves in the Caribbean Islands? I know not; but the lowest figure that I should suggest would be three hundred thousand, and the highest perhaps half a million.”

Verily, in those days ex-soldiers must have been too scarce to constitute a problem of any magnitude. Old official returns show that the annual ratio of mortality in the British Army from 1819 to 1828 was 57 per 1000 among men on foreign service, which means that less than a century ago, and during a period of profound peace, we lost men at a rate which gave a soldier of eighteen years' continuous service abroad absolutely no chance whatever of remaining alive, and subjected our troops to rather more than literal decimation for every two years of foreign service.

Nevertheless, the ex-soldier problem, confined at first almost exclusively to the disabled,

must have speedily assumed dimensions unmanageable under the "beggar's licence" system. Then, as Clode tells us: "For poor soldiers there was no statutory relief, save that which was given by a temporary Act, passed in the year 1662, for the relief of those soldiers who had served Charles I. and II. in the *late* wars. This Act, 14th Chas. II. c. 9, threw the burthen of their maintenance on the poor rates, in analogy to the provisions of an earlier Act (35th Eliz. c. 4); but no other provision was made by Parliament for any soldiers in this reign. It fell upon the King to devise some expedient for their relief; and, therefore, an asylum was founded at Chelsea as an hospital for aged, maimed, and infirm land soldiers, upon an estate vested in the Crown. The cost of the erection of this building, and of its future maintenance, was provided by a poundage deducted from the pay of every soldier—a principle for the sustentation of hospital accommodation (even when troops were upon active service) that was continued for many years, and as to Chelsea abolished in the year 1847. The first stone of Chelsea Hospital was laid on the 12th March 1682, but the Hospital was not completed until 1690."

So much for the popular tradition that Chelsea Hospital was wheedled out of Charles

the Second by the celebrated courtesan, Nell Gwynn. This institution is still with us, and long may it remain so, to "Gild the calm close of valour's various day," as the poet Rogers expresses it. But so far as in-pensioners are concerned, its bearing on the ex-soldier problem of to-day is so limited in its scope that for all practical purposes I fear we must write it down as but little more than an interesting and picturesque relic. It provides an asylum where a meagre handful of old heroes end their lives in peace and quietness, managed, I am glad to say, with a tactful care which is all to the credit of those who direct the faltering footsteps of the old gentlemen to their last long home. But it does no more than that, and for every old soldier who has died in Chelsea Hospital, how many have found a pauper's grave in the highways and byways of a "grateful country," or have been saved from this last shameful ignominy by the charity of their serving comrades ?

CHAPTER V

CONCERNING PENSIONS

It does not appear that any considerable extension of the in-pensioner system is either possible or altogether desirable. It means locking up too much money in ground, bricks, and mortar, which can be better spent in other directions for the benefit of the ex-soldier; and although cottage homes and similar institutions may tend to increase as time goes on, yet this marks the limit of any probable or feasible extension of the in-pensioner principle; which can never be more important in its relation to our problem than, say, almshouses are when compared with the full machinery of the poor law.

Not so out-pensioning, which from small and eleemosynary beginnings increased with such rapidity that as far back as 1825 the annual charge for pensions was no less than £1,268,039, 19s. 10d., which in the 1912-13 Army Estimates grew to £2,441,000, from which has to be deducted appropriations in aid

amounting to £524,000, leaving a net total of £1,917,000 chargeable against the vote for the year. This total includes £31,850 on account of Chelsea Hospital and Kilmainham Hospital, the latter a miniature edition of the Chelsea institution, founded in Dublin in 1684, with the number of inmates limited by Royal Warrant to 140. These figures are for the Army only, officers excluded; they represent the pension charges on behalf of the rank and file and their dependents; and, from the point of view of the tax-payer, the totals "give furiously to think." What they will be like after the war I should not care to even guess, especially as the rate for disability pensions has been largely increased in intention, and the number of men eligible for such pensions multiplied by an " x ," which can only be transformed into a known quantity when the last of the casualty lists is depleted of its pensionable men.

It is needful to ponder over the above statistics, both actual and potential, before passing any hasty strictures on the working of our pension system during the past, or making rash assertions regarding the incidence and scope of future extensions. But when every allowance is made for these weighty points, the fact remains that our pension system, administered by experts in the paltry art of

pension paring, has always been utterly unworthy of the best traditions of the richest nation in the world. Soldiers are pensioned for two reasons, either on account of disability, or for long service, and it cannot be disputed that in equity they earn their pensions; there is no semblance of charity connected with them. This principle was recognised as far back as 1806, when, under Mr. Windham's Act, a soldier became legally entitled to a pension, a right which has since lapsed, thus throwing the soldier's claim to pension solely on Royal Warrants and annual votes on supply. This, however, may pass as a mere matter of constitutional form; the vital point is that the soldier *earns* his pension and has a *right* to it. And, at the risk of appearing to labour a rather obvious point, I will clinch the argument by the following quotations from one of the many editions of the official *Advantages of the Army*. On page 8 we read: "That a man may expect either a sum of money or a pension, on quitting the Army, is a fixed principle of the Service." On page 31, under the heading, "PENSIONS FOR WOUNDS," we are told that: "In connection with wounds it must be noted that the principles of the Workmen's Compensation Act are recognised in the Army system by the payment of special pensions to men who are discharged on account

of wounds or injuries received either in action, or in consequence of the performance of any military duty. These payments are made without demur, or any of the expensive and troublesome litigation which often attends such cases in civil life."

This reads well, but the fact is, that pre-war disability pensions were pitifully meagre, were paid at rates which allowed large discretionary powers to the Pension Commissioners, and were governed by *The Royal Warrant for the Pay, Appointment, Promotion, and Non-Effective Pay of the Army*—to quote the full title of an official publication which calls for a digression all to itself. The volume is nothing much to look at, but its contents resemble the workings of Providence, inasmuch as they surpass all human understanding. No one has ever been able to understand the Pay Warrant; it is a continual joy to the departmental wallah and the despair of every orderly-room sergeant. Its masterly ambiguities defy the mentality of mortal man; it is an esoteric volume only to be consulted with wet towels bound tightly round the temples; and I will tell you exactly what ought to be done with it. Lord Kitchener is the man for the job. When Commander-in-Chief in India, he was unlucky enough to break a leg, and there is a well-founded tradition in the

Service that during his convalescence he gave sundry volumes of Indian Army regulations such a severe sub-editing that it was possible to both read and understand them when his lordship's task was completed. Now, I don't wish to suggest that Lord Kitchener might break another leg, no, not even in such an excellent cause as blue-pencilling the Pay Warrant, but there is just a slight tinge of doubt in my mind, a feeling expressed to perfection by Charles Lamb in that immortal essay of his, in which, after severely discountenancing the very idea of whipping a sucking pig to death, he, with a quip inimitably characteristic, hints that "It might impart a gusto——" So, my lord, while wishing you sound legs for the remainder of your days, yet, ah me—"It might improve the Pay Warrant——"

Failing such revision, we must take the Pay Warrant as it stands, and remember that as regards any point connected with pensions concerning which the Commissioners have the smallest discretionary power, and they often have a great deal, they can and do read the Royal Warrant absolutely as they please, twist it into whatever shade of meaning suits their parsimony, take a full and mean advantage of every dubious point, and generally decide that the soldier is

entitled to the smallest possible sum they can dole out to him. This means so much that I propose to explain the point to the non-technical reader by cases drawn from life, and which, I hasten to insist, must be taken, not as exceptional, but as absolutely typical of the ordinary workaday methods of the Pension Commissioners.

The first case deals with a Mutiny veteran who left the Service, as many of his comrades did, before he was entitled to an ordinary pension, and being fortunate enough to escape wounds or injuries, he had no disability pension. But as he was in possession of a war medal, and was, in bitter truth, in necessitous circumstances, he became entitled, on reaching the age of sixty-five, to a special campaign pension of ninepence a day, which he duly received. But it did not enable him to run more than a couple of high-power cars, for when I first heard of him he was in the workhouse.

I visited him, but before I saw him, the Master of the workhouse said to me, "He's a fine old chap, and it's a downright shame that a man of his stamp should be here. He worked as long as he could, but he's past it now, and he suffers a good deal at times from long-standing after-effects of the Indian climate. There's a mystery about him, nothing

very wonderful, but we can't understand it here. Perhaps he's getting a little childish, I don't know, but he has a fragment of wood which he simply worships. I expect he'll show it to you, if he takes to you ; but don't twit him about it if he does, because we like to humour him as much as we can ; you understand, don't you ? ”

“ Perfectly ; thanks for the hint,” I replied, and very soon afterwards I was face to face with the man. He was a fine specimen of a veteran, with apple-red cheeks, and hair and beard as white as driven snow. With old-world courtesy he rose to greet me, a little tremulous, but still a dignified figure of a man. The Mutiny ribbon showed plain on his work-house dress, a gleam of colour which in such a place hurt the eyes of a soldier. I hastened to get him back into his comfortable arm-chair, for which, as well as many other comforts and little privileges, even luxuries, he had to thank a kind-hearted master and matron, benevolent guardians, and the whole staff of the place, who made a kind of pet of him, and did everything they could to take the sting out of his condition.

He soon became chatty and sociable enough, but for all that his every word and action exhibited a certain dignified reserve, which made it difficult indeed for me to broach the

real object of my visit, which was to see whether anything could be done to enable him to end his days elsewhere. We talked, as old soldiers do, of many things which interest no other class, and at last he introduced the topic the workhouse Master had warned me to expect. After rummaging about in an inside breast-pocket, he produced something wrapped up in a spotless handkerchief, which he unfolded with reverent care, and showed me a tiny piece of wood, with a rough gash in it, across the grain, and from the sides of that gash, hairs, still soft and fair, glistened in the light. The old veteran gazed long and earnestly at this strange relic, looking at it in an abstracted manner, as if his thoughts were far, far away. Then, with a half start, he recollected both himself and me, and said, "Now, ye knows something about the Service, don't ye? But I'll be bound ye can't tell me the story of this little bit of wood; that's my secret, and I'll take it with me when I die."

But the old gentleman was mistaken, although I did not tell him so; for I had seen the counterpart of his treasure in the museum of the Royal United Service Institution, and I knew well enough where that grimly curious piece of wood came from—Cawnpore during the Mutiny, that was the place; the exact spot is thus described by General Neill,

the avenger: "Upwards of two hundred women and children were brought into that house; many had been killed in the boats, many killed and died in the entrenchment; all who survived fever, dysentery, and cholera in the confinement of that house were barbarously murdered, after the receipt of the intelligence of Havelock's first victory—this by the Nana's order. They were badly fed and treated at first, but afterwards got more and clean clothing and servants to wait on them. They were sent their evening meal on that fatal day, and after it these fiends rushed in and butchered them all; they were shot and hacked to pieces. The bodies of all who died there were thrown into the well of the house, all the murdered also. I saw that house when I first came in. Ladies' and children's bloody torn dresses and shoes were lying about, and locks of hair torn from their heads. The floor of the one room they were all dragged into and killed was saturated with blood."

Yes, those pauper eyes, now dim and watery with age, had gazed upon that awful scene, those lips had sworn that bitter oath to slay and spare not. Those hands, now wrinkled and feeble with age, had thrust home the vengeful bayonet many a time and oft; and for the sake of remembrance he

had brought away with him a piece of wood from that well covering, just a fragment into which a butchering sword had cut a wee tress of the hair of a child.

Here was one of the very men Havelock had commended to a "grateful country," but bitter experience had taught me that it was not the slightest use attempting to obtain an increase in these special campaign pensions, the official objection being that ninepence a day was the maximum payable to this man under the Article of the Warrant which authorised his pension. But the following Article appeared to hold out a promise of better things: "1207. Should a soldier's military service, or the incidents thereof, appear to Our Commissioners of Chelsea Hospital, and to Our Secretary of State, to merit a pension for which provision is not found in the foregoing regulations, or in the regulations in force at the date of the soldier's discharge, or in the regulations for Our Indian Forces, the award of such pension may be made with the consent of the Lords Commissioners of Our Treasury. A list of the pensions thus granted shall be annually laid before Parliament."

Basing his claim on the discretionary powers vested in the Chelsea Commissioners under the above Article of the Royal Warrant, the veteran, acting on my advice, made a formal

application to be allowed to surrender his special campaign pension, and, on the grounds that the "incidents" of his service merited a pension for which provision was not made in any other regulation, he asked to have his claim reassessed *de novo* under Article 1207. His application was duly forwarded to the Pension Commissioners, who, a few days afterwards, sent a stereotyped reply, a species of semi-circular, "regretting their inability" to do anything in the remotest degree likely to increase his pitiful pittance of ninepence a day. This was no exceptional case, it merely illustrates a rule to which there was no exception, for I took up several analogous cases during the years I spent on the staff of a military paper, and in each case the same negative reply, as cold and formal as a kerbstone, settled the matter finally and for bad; I cannot write "for good."

I rejoice to say, however, that, as in many similar cases, especially in Highland regiments, the officers of the man's old "crush" put their hands in their pockets and, quietly and tactfully, removed the fine old hero from the stigma of pauperism—a form of real charity to which the "gilded popinjays" were much addicted, "honest John." Ultimately, in 1907, when the old man with a scythe had thinned the ranks of the Crimean and Mutiny

veterans to a pitiful extent, the late Earl Roberts, backed by the powerful aid of the *Daily Telegraph*, raised a fund to save "all that was left of them." Officialdom responded in characteristic fashion; stirred by the jubilee of the Mutiny, the powers that be lost their heads, and, in a fit of reckless prodigality, simply running amuck with the nation's money, they startled the world with Army Order 93, of 1907, summarised as follows in the Pay Warrant, under the Article governing special campaign pensions: "(f) On attaining 70 years of age, men in receipt of less than a shilling a day may be granted an increase up to that rate." Such stupendous generosity, augmented by charity, made the lot of many a deserving veteran a good deal easier, but to show that the scandal was not altogether obliterated, I may mention that during the progress of the world war a Mutiny man was charged in a London police court for helping himself to a paltry herring to assuage the pangs of his hunger.

Other cases need not be given in detail; I will take them just as they stand from the 1905-6 report of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, with the comment that plenty of such cases can be turned up without difficulty, and the request that particular note be taken of the obvious fact that this powerful

Society was quite unable to get an increase in the special campaign pensions of these veterans.

To show how common such cases were, I give two which follow each other on one page of the report :

" James Calcutt, of Milton-under-Wychwood, formerly of the 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards. Aged 73 years. Married, no children. Discharged on reduction of Army after Crimea. Character 'good.' Pension, 9d. per diem. War medals : Crimea, with clasps for Sebastopol and Inkerman, where he was wounded in the thigh. Very infirm. Annual rent of his cottage (£5) is paid by the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society.

" Wm. Coyle, 88th Connaught Rangers and 5th Northumberland Fusiliers. War medals : Crimean and Turkish, clasp for Sebastopol. Wounded in the Quarries, June 7, 1855. Aged 70 ; wife, 64. Pension, 9d. a day. Both disabled and destitute. Occupies 'Paardeberg' Cottage Home."

On another page we learn that :

" The Executive Committee having received a letter from Field-Marshal Earl Roberts (Commander-in-Chief) asking for their kind assistance in the case of Private Dudley Stagpoole, V.C., late No. 2843, 57th Regiment, and there being room at 3 Wimborne Road, Lower Edmonton, they decided to send

Stagpoole there. He served in the Crimea, and throughout the New Zealand War, during which for his bravery he was awarded the Victoria Cross, and also the Distinguished Conduct Medal. He is also in possession of the Crimean medal, Turkish medal, New Zealand medal, and long service and good conduct medal. Until lately he had been employed at Woolwich Arsenal, but was discharged from there owing to the large reduction of the staff and the necessity of only keeping those who are the most able-bodied and vigorous to carry out the heavy work required."

Stagpoole's case is of peculiar interest. It shows that not even the Commander-in-Chief himself was able to obtain for such a magnificent soldier a pension sufficient to keep him from appealing to charity for a roof to cover him; and that occurred at a time when the authorities had discretionary power to have given the man fifty pounds a year for his V.C. alone, under an Article in the Royal Warrant clearly intended to apply to such cases. Furthermore, it shows how deserving old soldiers are turned away from our public works and departments when old age renders them unfit to do "the heavy work required." As a matter of fact, many of them employed in light billets, such as messengers, etc., are

compulsorily retired at sixty-five because they are technically members of the Civil Service, and therefore come under departmental rules intended to apply to those holding positions enabling them to retire on an ample superannuation allowance. Plenty of old soldiers have been thrown out to starve in this way, and this in a country which allows its judges to serve and draw handsome salaries until, as was proved in open court not so long since, their senile bickerings reflect discredit on a legal system second to none in the world.

From what I have written and have yet to write it must not be hastily inferred that I consider the Pension Commissioners as *individuals* responsible *personally* for the faults of a system and a department they did not create. That is not my idea. My remarks deal exclusively with the Pension Commissioners as a corporate body which has smeared its records of shame on the whitewashed walls of most of the work-houses in this country, and has established a tradition of paltry maladministration of Royal Warrants which would befit a bankrupt and semi-civilised "small state" squirming and shifting to avoid its financial obligations. The *individuals* concerned matter not, they never have mattered, for in this respect the Pension Commissioners illustrate exactly what Hazlitt had in mind when he wrote—"Public

bodies are so far worse than the individuals composing them, because the *official* takes the place of the *moral* sense. The nerves that in themselves were soft and pliable enough, and responded naturally to the touch of pity, when fastened into a machine of that sort become callous and rigid, and throw off every extraneous application that can be made to them with perfect apathy."

CHAPTER VI

PENSION TRAPS FOR THE DISABLED

I DO not envy the man who could read about the fate of those old veterans without feeling a hot flush of righteous indignation, and registering a firm resolve that the veterans of the world war will never be treated in such a shameful manner. Well, "wait and see," but in the meantime we may examine with profit the revised scale of disability pensions which will apply at once to the disabled. But before we get to the actual figures I should like to point out that however fairly the country may wish to treat its maimed men, such intention will most assuredly be thwarted just so far as absolute discretionary powers are vested in the Pension Commissioners. Such, I am sure, is not the national desire; and while we have every reason to insist upon such salutary control of pensions as shall avert anything resembling the abuses and scandals America endured after the Civil War, yet, on the other hand, it is intolerable to think

of permitting autocratic power to remain in the hands of a public department which has so sullied our national honour during the past, and is doubtless quite capable of doing so again. We need, we must have, a Pensions Appeal Board, composed of one member nominated by the Treasury, another by the Admiralty, another by the Army Council, another by the Board of Trade, and four business men appointed by leading Chambers of Commerce. Add to these an independent financial expert, a labour leader, and an ex-soldier or sailor, under the presidency of a chairman of undeniable social and financial standing, and we have a body of men fit to constitute a court of appeal from the decisions of the Pension Commissioners as regards disability pensions for soldiers, and also from Admiralty decisions regarding similar pensions for sailors. But this Appeal Board should only be recommendatory in its operative functions. It should take cognisance of all pension appeals viséd by a Member of Parliament or by the Officer Commanding the regiment to which the man formerly belonged, and recommend such increase, if any, from the award of the Pension Commissioners as the sliding scales in the Royal Warrant may permit. But these recommendations should not take effect until they had been submitted

to Parliament, for preference as a separate item in the annual estimates. Each case should be detailed briefly and separately, and the requisite vote, either in whole or part, dealt with in open session by those who will have to explain their words and votes to their constituents. The sons of the people have fought and bled, is it too much to ask that the representatives of the people shall have a direct and final word regarding the pensioning of those who, halt, blind, sick, and maimed, have borne the cruellest brunt of this truly terrible war? Are these men to be left, as our gallant Crimean and Mutiny men were, absolutely at the mercy of a department which has no soul to be damned, and thinks of nothing except short-sighted and savage "economy," which, however, must never extend to the comfortable salaries of the officials who administer it?

I think not, and I am sure the nation is with me. But here's the danger. Those real rulers of this country, the permanent officials of the departments concerned, will fight that suggested Pensions Appeal Board like tom-cats tied tail to tail and slung over a line. They will indeed, or I know them not, and they will fight the more bitterly because the suggested reform is both departmentally and constitutionally too regular and in proper

order to be sneered at as "fantastic." They know that such a scheme would impose a salutary and humane limit to the exercise of their despotic powers ; powers they have already arranged to perpetuate and extend, and for which they will struggle with all their might until an enlightened public opinion charges them clean out of the last ditch of entrenched officialdom. They have already selected their position, and arranged cunningly concealed barbed-wire entanglements in which they hope to catch tens of thousands of disabled men. Their plan is plain to the expert eye, but to make it clear to all and sundry I will reproduce the War Office leaflet in which it is outlined.

WHAT THE DISABLED SOLDIER WANTS TO KNOW

(Regular, Special Reserve, Territorial, or New Army)

1. If discharged for *disability caused by the present War*, what Pension will he get ?

(a) Every European soldier discharged as totally incapable of earning a livelihood owing to wounds or injuries or sunstroke, received in action or in the performance of military duty, or on account of blindness caused by military service, or of disease due directly and wholly

to war service, gets a pension of 25s. a week, under the Royal Warrant of 21st May 1915.

(b) If partially capable of earning a livelihood he may be granted such pension as will, with the wages he may be deemed capable of earning, bring his total income up to 25s. a week.

(c) To this total of 25s. an addition is made, according to rank, as follows : Corporal, 2s. a week ; Sergeant, 4s. ; Colour-Sergeant, 6s. ; Quarter-Master-Sergeant or Warrant Officer, Class II., 8s. ; Warrant Officer, Class I., 15s.

(d) A soldier totally incapacitated will, in addition, during the period of total incapacity, draw an allowance of 2s. 6d. a week for each of his children up to the age of 16.

(e) If partially incapacitated he may be granted an allowance, in addition to his pension, not exceeding 2s. 6d. for each child, ceasing at the age of 16.

(f) If a partially disabled soldier is able to earn so much that he gets very little benefit under the New Pension Warrant (even with the allowances for children) he may be pensioned under the 1914 Warrant if more favourable to him. This Warrant carries no children's allowances.

2. IF A SOLDIER, WHILE ON ACTIVE SERVICE, HAS LOST A LIMB OR AN EYE, OR HAS BEEN INJURED SO THAT HE REQUIRES SURGICAL APPLIANCES, WHAT IS DONE FOR HIM ?

The State will provide him, free of cost, with artificial limbs and other surgical appliances, such as artificial eyes, teeth, surgical boots, etc., for which applications should be addressed to the Secretary, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, S.W.

WAR OFFICE,
August 1915.

The above is an exact copy of the official leaflet in question, and, in the light of past experience, I can only call it a sinister document pregnant with trouble for our disabled men. Its intention is good, it shows that the heart of the nation beats warm and human, and, at first sight, nineteen ordinary people out of twenty would place it aside with the remark, "That settles it, and I'm very glad to see that something decent is to be done for the wounded."

Only those who have wrestled with the Pension Commissioners during the past can appreciate the real meaning of this apparently lucid and matter-of-fact leaflet. Take (*a*) for example, and note the words—"disease due directly and wholly to war service"—one of the pension qualifications. Suppose a man enlists and breaks down under training, or contracts disease through exposure in bad weather at home, and is eventually discharged without ever hearing a shot fired in

anger. Has he "war service" to thank for his condition, which may prevent him from working again as long as he lives? The average man would answer this question in the affirmative without a second thought, but not so the Pension Commissioners. They will, unless their claws are cut, have power to decide gravely that the man met with disease while "preparing" for war service, that his disability is not "due directly and wholly to war service," and will proceed forthwith to "regret their inability" to pension the man, except perhaps under another article in the Pay Warrant, at the rate of a few pence per day for a strictly limited period. Tens of thousands of cases can and will be treated in this way unless the nation rides the Pension Commissioners with a tight rein, which is one reason why a Pensions Appeal Board is a vital necessity.

Months after the above was written, so very recently that I was only able to insert the matter just before this book went to press, my words came so true that the following appeared in the *Evening News* :

WAR-BROKEN MEN NEGLECTED BY THE STATE

One of the first matters to receive the attention of Parliament next week should be the distress among discharged soldiers and

sailors who have been incapacitated by the war, but whose breakdown is physical, and is officially "not attributed" to their service experiences. The injustice of this system has often been the subject of criticism.

One case is reported of a sailor who died a few weeks ago in Fulham workhouse infirmary. He had spent many months in the North Sea, and came home suffering from complete nervous breakdown. He leaves a widow and four little children. Had he lost a leg he would have had a pension. As it was, his dependents got no allowance.

He was simply one of the many thousands of what are called "non-attributable" cases. That is to say, the Admiralty held that his illness—although he was perfectly fit when he went to sea—was not due to the war. If a man loses an eye or a limb, or is discharged through dysentery, he is assured of a pension on discharge.

But if his reason goes, his constitution is ruined, and he leaves the Navy or Army a consumptive or a nervous wreck, he has at present nothing between him and destitution except charity.

ON THE RATES

In numerous cases of this class the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society has given assistance

with the aid of the National Relief Fund. But it cannot meet all the calls,—the percentage of cases of disablement of this sort is high,—and in many parts of the country men broken in the war are now coming on the rates.

Some of these cases have been brought to the notice of the Local Government Board, and it is understood Mr. Long is inquiring into them.

Ministers, at any rate, will hear a good deal of the matter after the House of Commons meets.

The Pensions Committee, it is believed, regard the question of eligibility as outside its province. But it must be someone's business to see that provision is made for these cases.

One Cabinet Minister is reported to have been shocked at the details of one of these cases, and to have remarked that it was the first he had heard of them. Curiously enough the various bodies who are advising the Government appear to avoid consulting those associations which, coming constantly into contact with soldiers' dependents, have the best right to be heard on this particular problem.

Some time ago Sir Frederick Milner reported that out of sixty soldiers discharged from a London hospital, twenty-two were certified as suffering from chronic pulmonary tuberculosis.

As the War Office does not recognise that consumption can be caused by service, these men will be deprived of a pension.

CONSUMPTION VICTIMS

Major Tudor Craig, the secretary of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, informed an *Evening News* representative to-day that similar cases of this sort were being reported daily.

"When a case of consumption is not too far advanced we try to obtain sanatorium treatment for the patient," he said. "But when it is far advanced it is impossible to do anything for him.

"It is in my opinion absolutely wrong to describe such cases as 'not attributable to service.' I hope Parliament will take up this matter at once. This Society is spending money at the rate of £4000 or £5000 a week, but we cannot possibly meet these 'non-attributable' cases, which would require an enormous outlay."

Describing the case of the sailor who died at Fulham, Major Tudor Craig said he was a naval reservist, and was employed when the war broke out by the Westminster City Council. When he was discharged from the Navy his nerves had entirely gone.

“I did my best to get something done for him by the Admiralty,” added Major Tudor Craig, “but the official answer was invariably that the case was ‘not attributable.’ So he died in the workhouse.”

SOME OTHER CASES

The authorities cannot plead that the Westminster case is an exception. Stories of the plight of “not attributable” men and their families are coming from all parts of the country.

Picking up letters at random from voluntary workers of the Society, Major Tudor Craig gave details of some of them.

One instance was that of a soldier who had a tumour on the brain and nervous trouble; in another rheumatism, in another pulmonary trouble, and so on. And very often there was a wife unable to go out to work.

The Society can only promise assistance to the cases it is helping for a short period, so that unless some prompt measures are taken the outlook for the families of the “not attributable” class of discharged soldiers will be blacker than ever.

As time progresses, there is sure to be more agitation of the type illustrated by the above press cutting, and I dare say that by the time

this volume appears in print the scandal will have received much attention in both Parliament and the papers. I think I can predict the result. The Pension Commissioners will be given the tip by the Treasury wallahs that "something" must be done to quieten the agitation, and, for the time being, what discretionary powers the Commissioners may have will be exerted in favour of the men. Very possibly, too, these powers will be helped by a confidential departmental memo evolved to save the situation for the moment. Then, of course, the scandal will be more or less dormant, and will be kept within bounds for just as long as the heads of "departments concerned" may deem expedient. But as soon as they think it safe to start their tricks again, they can do it by a stroke of the pen; they have only to reverse or modify their own decisions and the thing is done. They have done it before at the expense of the British soldier, have these officials who sit on the national money-bags. Only a few years ago, during the reign of Haldane, they concocted a plot to rob the serving soldier of no small portion of his pay, and by introducing "proficiency pay" in the place of "service pay" diddled the British soldier out of hundreds of thousands of pounds every year.

I have no space for details of the pay

swindle referred to above, but I exposed the whole thing at the time in a series of articles in the *Morning Post*, and I well remember using one illustration which will serve to give my readers an idea of the principle of the trick. I stated that the pay changes were all against the men, and that they reminded me of the action of the miserly parent who was reputed to have given a child a penny to go to bed without any supper, stole the penny while the child slept, and then deprived it of breakfast as a punishment for losing the penny. This illustration will serve, to an extent, to show what will happen to the men who are the cause of the present agitation. They will get their penny of pension, but the authorities, by making such pensions temporary, will take them away as soon as they dare, and men who may become pensionable in years to come on account of disease incurred on service will most assuredly get nothing at all. Only a Pensions Appeal Board can change all this, that alone can provide a permanent remedy, and unless we have it, the responsible officials will merely continue to trim their regulations in accordance with the passing wind of popular agitation, always striving to maintain the traditions and precedents of a section of officialdom which has invariably treated ex-soldiers of the past as human offal, as something of no more

account than the "cannon fodder" the German high command flings into action without a thought of the slaughter.

There are other vital points. A glance at the leaflet shows what a vast difference "total incapacity" or "partial incapacity" makes to the pension of a man, which is but just. What is grossly unfair is that the Pension Commissioners, with their iniquitous record, should be, in effect, the sole judges of what constitutes "partial" or "total" disablement. Surely when a hard-and-fast line has to be drawn on a point of such vital importance to a maimed man, it should not be left wholly in the hands of officials whose methods are enough to turn Bumbledom green with envy?

(b) can only be described as amazing. It means, if it means anything at all, that a man is to be pensioned for disability according to what he "may be deemed capable of earning" towards a "total income" of "25s. a week." On the face of it, this is a direct encouragement to malingering until a man's pension is permanently assessed; for why should he do his best to earn as much as he can in spite of his condition when his pension will be pared for his pains? This is bad, but the worst thing of all is the fact that it will rest with the Pension Commissioners to decide what a man "may be deemed

capable of earning." Of course, medical boards will report on every case, but who is to decide when doctors disagree? The Pension Commissioners, and God help the men!

Evidently the danger of "malingering" dawned on the official mind, for the August leaflet was cancelled in the following November and was replaced by another which informs a disabled man that—"If he is capable of partly supporting himself, and the sum he is judged capable of earning is less than 25s. a week, he may be given a pension of such amount as with that sum will make up 25s. a week.

"He should clearly understand that the wages, which will be taken into account in fixing his pension, are not what he actually earns, but what he is judged capable of earning. His earning capacity will be reviewed from time to time. *It will not be to his advantage to refuse or throw up a job in the hope of getting his pension increased or avoiding its reduction, or to neglect to make full use of the Artificial Appliances with which he may have been supplied.*"

Really, "this is more and more sad." How on earth do the Pension Commissioners propose to determine what a man may be capable of earning except by taking his actual earnings as a guide? What proof can they get that a man is not earning so much as he might

because he fears that increased earnings will mean decreased pension? To answer the latter question the Commissioners would require a close and intimate knowledge of the private affairs of every disabled man concerned, and what chance have they of obtaining such information in the tens of thousands of cases they will have to decide?

The thing cannot be done, and the authorities know it. The only sound principle is to award the disabled a permanent *minimum* pension on the understanding that such pension may be supplemented in the event of increased disability from the original cause. This suggestion is not new, and is not mine. I have seen it in the Pay Warrant before now, and why the authorities are keeping it out of their official leaflets relating to the New Pension Warrant is indeed one of those things "no fellah can understand." Grudgingly, however, they have admitted that the disabled should have a permanent pension, for we are told that—"A soldier who has lost a leg, or an arm, or an eye, will as a rule receive a *permanent* pension of not less than 10s. 6d. a week, irrespective of what his earnings may be." Why that "as a rule"? Does this mean that in certain cases less than 10s. 6d. a week will be granted for the disabilities mentioned? I suppose so, and, to be fair,

will likewise infer that in certain other cases the 10s. 6d. a week will be increased. But I feel fairly sure, knowing something of the ways of the Pension Commissioners, that in the vast majority of cases they will try to impose a "flat rate" of 10s. 6d. a week for the disabilities in question. The outstanding fact is that, save in exceptional cases, 10s. 6d. a week is to be the minimum permanent pension for loss of a limb or an eye. Then why not say so straight away? Why "hedge" by that "as a rule," and why leave so many doubtful points which may induce men to think that by playing their cards well they can get something a good deal nearer the maximum of 25s. a week for total disablement? This will not do at all. The men are not in the least likely to be satisfied with any such arrangement. They want something more sensible and reasonable; their loss and suffering is plain and clear; their pensions should be equally distinct and free from misunderstanding and unsettling conditions.

To save officialdom the trouble of correcting me, I may say I know that if a man is not satisfied with his pension he can appeal to the War Office. What an appeal! From the Pension Commissioners to the War Office! Good heavens! that is like a stare-eyed rabbit squealing an agonised appeal from one jaw to

the other of the steel teeth-trap which has its lacerated leg in a fatal torture grip. The illustration is just, for do not the Treasury officials hold both the War Office and the Pension Commissioners in the hollow of their financial hand? This "appeal" angers me. How I wish I could explode about it as Dr. Johnson did when that thunderous "Sir!" of his detonated his every subsequent word into a verbal shrapnel of devastating criticism. This is far beyond my powers, but, on behalf of the rank and file of the British Army, I can and do thank the authorities for that right of "appeal" with exactly that measure of thanks Dr. Johnson awarded to the nobleman and man of letters who would fain have posed as the patron of his dictionary.

The only real hope the men have lies in a Pensions Appeal Board of the type I have suggested, and not a moment should be lost in agitating for the appointment of such a board *now*. After the war may be too late. Peace will bring with it such a diversity of grave and complex problems that a matter of this kind may easily become submerged, if not completely, at least to such an extent that the requisite driving power will not be forthcoming to smash the reform home. And, mark this, nothing less than such a reform will be of the least use, and *now* is the time to get it. Once the

evil is in full working order, once the Pension Commissioners manage to establish their unchallenged tyranny over the pensionables of the world war, it will be too late to do anything without such a shock that prudent men may prefer to leave bad alone in case it might become worse. Then, of course, there will be nothing for it except newspaper agitation, questions in Parliament, seething discontent among the men, and occasional speeches from those who happen to take an interest in the subject. All this will have no more effect on the Pension Commissioners than pea-shooters would on a cupola fort. They know very well that legislation, not agitation, is necessary to limit their powers, and unless Parliament gets this Pensions Appeal Board in full working order as quickly as possible, the Pension Commissioners will continue to "regret their inability" to do the fair and straight thing until the last of those who fought in the world war shall have "gone West."

Before quitting our disabled men I should like to explain that their pensioning by no means solves the whole of the sad problem presented by their condition, or discharges the complete national responsibility towards them. But as it will be more convenient to deal with this phase of the matter at a later

stage, I propose to pass on to those ordinary pensions earned by soldiers for long service, usually twenty-one years with the Colours.

These pensions, in the vast majority of cases, are far too meagre. That military miracle, the warrant officer who contrives to put in enough continuous qualifying service to claim a pension of four to five shillings a day, has nothing much to squeal about, and the same may be said of those non-commissioned ranks who, by twelve years' continuous service not below the rank of sergeant, manage to annex pensions of from two shillings and ninepence a day downwards on completing their "twenty-one." But immediately below this class we have corporals, bombardiers, and second-corporals who cannot make more than one shilling and eightpence a day on completing twenty-one years, and often make less because they have not held their rank long enough to qualify for a full pension. Many sergeants and even staff-sergeants find themselves hard hit in a similar way, for it is not every man who can keep three chevrons on his arm for twelve years on end in the British Army. It needs some doing, take my word for it. When I was soldiering, the prospect appalled me to such an extent that I left as "a downstairs corporal," that is a full-blown gunner with two good conduct badges, which,

together with an "Exemplary" character, have since provided a continual source of amazement to those who know me best, and are regarded by experts as one of the biggest flukes in the history of the rank and file of the British Army.

Thereby hangs a good story connected with the only War Office Committee I ever knew which accomplished anything beyond the issuing of a report. This Committee, presided over by that true friend of the soldier, Colonel Sir Edward Ward, Bart., who was then Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War, sat at the War Office to see what could be done to improve the assessment of soldiers' characters on discharge or transfer to the reserve. The system then in vogue shepherded the goats from the sheep in a truly astonishing manner, giving the very best boys "Exemplary" characters, the next best "Very Good," then "Good," and so on, down through "Latterly Good" and "Fair" to "Very Bad," not to say "Shocking"! In effect, the whole system, which was in force for very many years, was about as absurd and unjust as it could be, often inflicting serious hardships on good men, and never answering a single one of the useful purposes it was intended to fulfil. When this War Office Committee sat upon the system, in more senses of the word than one, I am

pleased to say, I was asked to attend and give evidence, which, as well as I can call it to mind, I will reproduce in the official "Question" and "Answer" style, with the explanation that the questioner was Sir Edward, while I was responsible for the answers.

Q. What is your opinion concerning the characters given to men on return to civil life?

A. They are thoroughly bad in all respects. In appearance they are like a cross between the licence of a ticket-of-leave man and a writ for debt, and in reality they are altogether unreliable and unsatisfactory.

Q. Indeed! The question of their reliability is of great importance. Why are you so emphatic concerning their unreliability?

A. Well, Sir Edward, they gave me an "Exemplary" character!

That did it; that was proof positive which compelled even the Army Council to bestir itself, and I am glad to say that the bad old system was shortly afterwards a thing of the past.

To return to our pensions. Below the classes I have already outlined we discover that astonishing soldier, the British private, who for twenty-one years' service straight on end with the Colours, in peace or war, sweating and swotting his life out all over the Empire,

receives a life pension of one shilling and a penny a day. This is not enough, not nearly enough, and it will have to be very largely increased as soon as the recruiting shoe pinches when the war is over.

CHAPTER VII

EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

It must be clearly understood, however, that pensions, even at their best, cannot solve more than a fraction of the ex-soldier problem. They have never done so since Mr. Caldwell introduced the short-service system in the early seventies; and except so far as disabled men are concerned, pensions scarcely enter into the argument when we discuss the future of the millions of men the world war will send back to civil life. This brings us to the various agencies which exist to assist men to obtain employment. The Corps of Commissioners concerns itself mainly with providing situations for pensioners, and must be at once placed in a class by itself when we consider the ex-soldier problem as a whole. This fine Corps comprises a unique body of disciplined men, it is old established, has considerable funds, and a deserved reputation among employers which places it on a pinnacle in a state of "splendid isolation." It is a very

straightforward body, it recognises both what it can and cannot do. It supplies guaranteed and uniformed men of unimpeachable honesty and good character to employers who require such men for positions of trust and responsibility which make no great call on technical qualifications.

So far, so good ; the trouble is that the Corps can only operate in cities or large towns where big businesses demand the services of a uniformed Commissionaire, which means that in point of numbers the Corps cannot do more than touch the fringe of the ex-soldier problem. This is so true that not one man in a thousand of the vast numbers now confronting us will stand a chance of becoming a Commissionaire, and it is most essential that the general public should bear this fact in mind. Commissionaires are so often seen, and are so noticeable in their smart uniforms, that the man in the street is apt to conclude that every other ex-soldier can become a Commissionaire if he has a mind that way. And, without in the least disparaging the Corps, it is very necessary to dispel this fallacy by pointing out that some four to five thousand men, many of whom are in "jobs for life," complete the normal establishment of the Commissionaires ; and that the number of vacancies per annum is low on account of the permanent nature of so many

of the situations found by the Corps. This gives no cause for criticism, the Corps of Commissionaires does its own work in its own way, and does it remarkably well, and must be left to "gang its ain gait" if and when the work of other societies is directed into fresh channels. But we cannot ignore its limitations. It exists to supply a particular stamp of man to a strictly limited class of employer, and it cannot do more than this without destroying its characteristic features, marring its distinctive points, and generally playing fast and loose with everything which has brought it to its present position. This is no fault; only a reformer with a bee in his bonnet would shiver a lance with the Commissionaires in an endeavour to improve the lot of the ex-soldier; and here we will leave this admirable society with every hope for its continued prosperity.

Other distinctive organisations, such as the Brigade of Guards' Employment Society, the Royal Fusiliers' (City of London Regiment) Employment Association, the Riflemen's Aid Society, the Northumberland Fusiliers' Aid Society, the Royal Engineer Labour Bureau, and many "Old Comrade" and other regimental associations, can be grouped together so far as they influence the employment of ex-soldiers. They all do good work, but so limited in its extent that the Brigade of

Guards' Employment Society, perhaps the largest of them all, had quite a good year if it placed between three and four hundred men in employment. Here, again, no fault whatever can be found. These societies are run quite privately, and as far as they go are in all respects commendable. Their strongest point lies in the fact that officers, past and present, who are often wealthy men of influence, will naturally do more for men who have left their own regiments than they will for the average ex-soldier, no matter how kindly disposed they may be towards old soldiers as a class. It follows, therefore, that these societies cannot be put into the melting-pot, they must remain separate and distinct units, and be placed aside as a minor but by no means trivial auxiliary in the fight for the betterment of the prospects of ex-soldiers as a whole.

We now pass to the means whereby the bulk of the ex-soldiers of the past have, or have not, as the case may be, obtained employment on return to civil life; and before I begin to discuss these matters I wish to make one point as clear as words can clarify it. This point concerns the personal behaviour and endeavour of the many officers and officials connected with the various agencies I am about to describe, and also the

very large numbers of honorary workers who have helped according to their lights and abilities in the effort to solve the ex-soldier problem. These people have done their level best with the means at their disposal; they have striven hard on lines which may have been mistaken, but their sincerity and honesty of purpose cannot be doubted for a moment. As individuals they cannot be criticised by any fair-minded man, but, in their official capacities, as human cogs in an imperfect and unsatisfactory piece of machinery, they cannot escape from the faults of their positions; from stupid systems created when they were at school, perhaps before they were born, and I beg of them to take this purely impersonal view of what I am about to write. Above all, I ask them to remember that at heart their intentions and mine are absolutely identical; that we are both supremely anxious to discover a practical solution of one of the most difficult and intricate problems connected with our national life.

Having, I trust, cleared the air of everything which might even be imagined to give a personal tinge to what is really a first-hand study of the economic position of the ex-soldier, I will pass on to deal with the War Office, with which, for the sake of convenience, I propose to group all the means whereby ex-

soldiers obtain employment under the State. As far as I am aware, War Office effort on behalf of ex-soldiers was first evidenced by the creation of a War Office list of men who were officially commended to civil employers. But this has long been a thing of the past, and for some years the War Office has specialised in such State employment for ex-soldiers as lay within its immediate control, added to similar employment in other departments it was more or less able to influence; and has also permitted officers on the active list to assist in official capacities in carrying on the good work in conjunction with an association which appeals mainly to civilian employers. In addition, it has permitted certain sections of military organisation, mostly connected with recruiting, to provide such assistance towards finding work for men as might be rendered without prejudicing the essentially military objective for which such organisation exists.

Finance excepted, the above may be taken as a fair summary of direct official effort so far as it affects the placing of men in employment; and the following extracts from the General Annual Report on the British Army, for the year ending 30th September 1911, will serve to show in detail just what was done as regards State employment during what

may be considered as a normal year ; these are best displayed in tabular form as under :

Name of Department or Nature of Employment.	Total number of Ex-Soldiers employed during the Year under review.
As Clerks in the War Office . . .	21
Royal Army Clothing Department and Factory	Nil
Works and Fortifications Department.	203
Ordnance Factories	137
Army Service Corps Services . . .	463
Army Ordnance Department . . .	403
As Teachers in Army Schools . . .	11
As Customs Watchers	20
Office of Works	40
H.M. Stationery Office	5
Post Office	1488
Prisons Service	99
As Pensioner Messengers in Public Offices	32
Total	2922

A glance at the above table will show that Sir Ian Hamilton's "pretty hard job as a postman" makes up rather more than half of the total. Furthermore, we have nothing to show how many of these Post Office berths were of a temporary or part-time nature ; but as the proportion of established postmen is low, we may take it as certain that the ex-soldier often obtained nothing better than a few hours' work a day, plus from four shillings

a week upwards as "a part-timer." Even those who were fully employed were, with the possible exception of a meagre sprinkling of telegraphists from the Royal Engineers, given minor appointments worth something round about a pound a week. None of the better paid billets fell to the lot of these men, who, scarcely without exception, were appointed at a wage well below the "minimum living wage" of thirty shillings per week we hear so much about. I cannot say what the average figure may be: as far as my experience goes, this information is not available to the public—it is certainly not included in any official return; from which it is not uncharitable to infer that the authorities have no particular reason to be proud of it. Obviously, it is not to be advertised as one of the "Advantages of the Army," and, equally obviously, all this will have to be changed for the better "when the boys come home."

Turning to employment provided by departments directly controlled by the War Office, I have no hesitation in saying that by far the greater number of these jobs can only be classified as rough, unskilled labour, and I have incontrovertible authority for stating that they include such billets as barrack labourers, paid, years after the end of the Boer War, at the rate of fifteen shillings and

sixpence a week with quarters, or seventeen shillings a week without quarters: the pay in Ireland was two shillings a week less than these rates! That was the example the War Office set to employers after the end of our last great war, but I must hasten to explain that combatant officers were not responsible for this: the real villains of the piece were the Treasury officials, of the same ilk as the Pension Commissioners, who have no use for an ex-soldier except to starve him. Yes, starve him. One of the most piteous letters I ever read came to me from a "shilling a day" pensioner employed as a barrack labourer in Ireland, and told how he and his wife and children really had to bite short, to deprive themselves of the necessities of life, in the constant struggle to make ends meet on such a miserable pittance.

The crux of the whole question as regards the State employment of ex-soldiers is simply this: excepting naval and military officers, past and present, the heads of every non-combatant department in the State,—the real heads, that is, not the "come and go" political Ministers,—are resolved that the ex-soldier is fit for nothing better than a "touch his hat" job as messenger, porter, or something similar at a wage of as much below thirty shillings per week as even they have the impudence

to offer him. Immediately behind these departmental despots-in-chief we find arrayed every subordinate of any importance, equally resolved to protect the vested interests of his class, to make sure that the Civil Service or any other Government department shall not be contaminated by the presence of ex-soldiers who are the least degree removed from "hewers of wood and drawers of water." This is no figure of speech, no indignant slash in the dark at something I resent but do not understand. It is the truth, the bare truth, and nothing but the truth; and one of the reasons why I am so positive about it is because I happened to be selected by my comrades to give evidence on behalf of ex-soldiers before the Royal Commission on the Civil Service.

When I appeared before the Commission I advocated two things. First, I contended that soldiers were as much entitled as any other body of public servants to benefit by the rule, "Once a servant of the State always a servant of the State." That is to say, suppose a man did ten years in the Army and then became a clerk of sorts in some Government office; very well, I contended, and still maintain, that the ten years of military service should count towards pension in his new capacity. I also contended that as short service meant the

continual return to civil life of very large numbers of men, these men, having served the State in the onerous capacity of a soldier, should be given preference in Civil Service and other appointments of a like nature for which they might be qualified to a reasonable extent. On the same principle I claimed that the cream of the ex-soldier class should be given a fair show in those stiff entrance examinations for Civil Service billets really worth having ; and my way of doing this was to allow "service marks" for each year of military service, thus allowing the ex-soldier to compete on fair terms against the latest productions of the crammer's art. Personally, I fail to see anything so very revolutionary in these proposals, but as I detailed my ideas to the Commission, it was abundantly manifest that I was not finding favour in some exceedingly select official quarters. Eyebrows were raised, faces grew slightly flushed, while a species of "sensation in court" atmosphere was so very noticeable that not even the calm dignity of the noble Chairman could altogether dispel it. At last, however, some of the officials concerned got over the shock caused by the painful discovery that ex-soldiers were asking to be treated rather better than departmental door-mats, and I was interrogated as follows, or "in words to the same

effect," as we say on the proceedings of a court-martial.

Q. Have you considered the probable result if selected ex-soldiers were brought into those divisions of the Civil Service where there is considerable responsibility, transferred, so to speak, almost direct from the ranks to such appointments?

A. Yes, I have, and in my opinion they would do the work fully as well as a youth who had just left a crammer's.

Q. Very well, suppose that is admitted, and the result is that an ex-soldier of superior type, a man of middle age, shall we say, finds himself in an office and under the immediate control of a junior clerk who had come in just before him through the usual channels, and was above him by reason of a short departmental seniority. Would not such a position be bad for discipline—could you expect a man of the age of the ex-soldier to hold a position which made a mere youth his superior, so to speak?

A. Oh yes, that wouldn't matter in the least. We are used to boy officers in the Army, you know, bless 'em.

There you are, that's the kind of thing a man has thrown at him before a Royal Commission, and it shows to a nicety just how hollow and artificial the present situation is, how it has to be bolstered up by every thread

of special pleading which can be stretched in the way of the deserving ex-soldier. What it does not show, however, is the formidable strength of those who will fight to the last against any change worth mentioning. Do you know who these people are? I will tell you; they are those permanent officials, mostly connected with finance, who are so tremendously powerful that they have never been beaten but once, and that was by nothing less than that ring of patriotic admirals who insisted on the needs of the Navy being met, and won through in face of every departmental opposition civilian officialdom could invent. Now you know exactly what the ex-soldier has to fight before he can come into his own as regards State employment in this country.

How far my words are justified may be judged from the following extracts from official reports. Regarding Assistant Clerks (Abstractor Class) a House of Commons' Committee reported in 1895:

"There are many men in the Army well qualified on leaving the colours to perform clerical work such as is allotted to the 'abstractor' class in the public offices. It is clear, however, that in the competitive examinations upon which clerks of this class are appointed such men compete at a disadvantage with younger men whose education had more re-

cently finished, and who, in many cases, have had practice in doing examination papers.

“ Their inferiority as competitors in an examination does not, in the opinion of competent witnesses, indicate any corresponding inferiority in education, in intelligence, or in fitness for the work of this branch of the Public Service. Your Committee, therefore, recommend that the experiment should be tried of reserving a certain number of appointments of this class for competition among soldiers leaving the colours, subject to the existing limit of age, which would at present apply in their case, and subject also to the successful candidates passing a standard to be determined by the Civil Service Commissioners. Your Committee are of opinion that this could be done without risk to the efficiency of the public service.”

On the promulgation of the report from which the above extract is taken, the War Office asked the Treasury to accede to the recommendation of the Committee, but that Department replied as follows :

“ Since the date of the Committee’s report it has been decided not to make any further appointments to the old class of abstractors which was mainly composed of registered men copyists, but to replace it by a class recruited by limited competition among the boy clerks

and copyists of the Service, on their compulsory retirement under the regulation which terminates such service at the age of 20. Their Lordships cannot but recognise that such lads have established by their previous employment in a Public Department a somewhat preferential claim to permanent posts in the Service for which they are fitted by good service and character."

The War Office repeated the request that a certain number of these appointments might be allotted for competition among ex-soldiers, but the Treasury expressed their inability to agree to such an arrangement, even as an experiment.

Ten years later, Sir Edward Ward's Committee commented on the above as follows:

"We are in complete agreement with the proposal made by the Select Committee, and are confirmed in this view by knowledge of the fact that ex-soldiers are now successfully employed at the War Office and in Army offices generally on work of often greater importance than that allotted to assistant clerks. Viewing the question from the standpoint of the relative claim on the State of boys who have served in public departments for some part of their early life, and that of men who have given years of service as such in the Army and Navy, with its concomitant

risks, the Committee consider that the claim of the latter should have great weight, and therefore recommend that a majority of the appointments—of which there are about 1400 in all—as assistant clerks in public offices shall be reserved for ex-soldiers and sailors.”

From the foregoing it is evident that the Treasury officials calmly altered the conditions of entry into the Civil Service in order to defy the recommendation of a Select Committee of the House of Commons, derided the War Office, and called forth a sharp reminder from Sir Edward Ward’s Committee, which was likewise derided. All this was done simply and solely to keep ex-soldiers from State employment worth having; and as such powerful agencies failed to make the least impression on the forces arrayed against men who have worn the King’s uniform, have I said a word too much about the formidable character of the opposition which has to be broken down on behalf of the men? for it must and will be broken down until ex-soldiers and sailors have a fair chance in every department of the Civil Service.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EX-SOLDIER ABROAD AND AT HOME

AT this juncture it is worth noting what other countries have done as regards the State employment of their ex-soldiers, whose conditions of service approximated to those in force in our own Army. General Sir Ian Hamilton dealt with this subject in a memorandum he wrote, when Adjutant-General, for the "private information" of Lord Haldane, then Mr. Haldane, Secretary of State for War. This was afterwards published under the title *Compulsory Service*, and quotation from a work of such origin and standing must be regarded as almost the last word on a point of considerable interest which has a direct bearing on our own ex-soldier problem.

In Russia we read that in 1909 "Arrangements were therefore made with other Ministers for the reservation of Government posts of an average salary of £30 to £40 per annum for all sub-ensigns discharged after ten or fifteen years' extended service." These sub-ensigns

are in effect "re-engaged non-commissioned officers," and our author states that Russia intended to have 73,000 of them; which means that for this class alone Russia is doing infinitely more than we have ever done for the whole of the rank and file of the British Regular Army. One point needs elucidation to prevent misunderstanding. We must not forget that thirty or forty pounds a year in Russia equals a good deal more than the same amount in this country. Evidently a Russian must be more than "passing rich" on such an income, for, in another place, Sir Ian, referring to a bounty of £106 for ten years' re-engaged service, or a life pension of ten pounds per year for thirteen years of such service, says: "These sums may not sound very magnificent in the ears of a rich Englishman, but, actually, they are liberal." This was written in Petrograd, where, presumably, our author had every facility to get at the facts.

As regards France, Sir Ian states that "The French Government has provided for its professional, as distinguished from its conscript soldiers, 65,000 nice little posts during the past twelve years. These are positions as minor functionaries in the offices of the State Departments, positions secured in private business by official pressure, positions in the posts and

telegraphs, positions on the railways, positions as foresters."

These 65,000 posts, be it noted, were created to meet with the demands "of some 56,000 men," to quote Sir Ian once more. Now, in the same volume, Haldane refers to our "professional long-range army of nearly 300,000," say, in round figures, a force five times as great as the professional army maintained by France. Very well, according to the official report on the British Army quoted in my last chapter, we had, in 1911, a total of 6612 ex-soldiers employed under the War Office, the total of vacancies filled during the year amounting to 1238. Unfortunately we have no aggregate totals of ex-soldiers employed in our remaining State departments, but we know that the vacancies filled during the year numbered 1716, which, if computed on the ratio between vacancies filled annually and total aggregate of posts filled under the War Office, allows us, by giving the State a liberal margin in its favour, to multiply by six the vacancies filled annually under the State outside War Office control. This gives us a total of 10,296, which, added to the War Office total of 6612, makes a grand total of 16,908 State-provided billets shared among the ex-soldiers of a 300,000 army in this country, compared with 65,000 "nice little posts" the French

Government provided during twelve years for an army 56,000 strong. So much for quantity ; in point of quality the difference was so great that our own Adjutant-General felt moved to make a most disparaging comparison against his own country. Verily, "they managed these things better in France."

It is to be hoped that the record of our gallant Allies will shame our State departments into a different sense of their responsibilities towards our ex-soldiers of the world war, but I am sure that nothing of the kind will happen unless public opinion is educated to an extent enabling it to appreciate the real truth about the ex-soldier problem, a thing it has never been able to do during the past, because officialdom has consigned this truth to the bottom of such a deep well that only a trained diver can hope to find it. For example, I will refer back to the 1911 Report on the British Army, and quote chapter and verse in support of my assertion.

On page 19 we learn that 18,385 men with "Exemplary," "Very Good," or "Good" characters were discharged or transferred to the reserve during the year, and on page 20 we are told that "the number of men for whom employment was" found totalled 11,273, "to which may be added men who are known to have themselves obtained employment,"

making a "general total" of 19,880. It is indeed a very "general total," including no less than 8607 men who, on what reliable authority I have never been able to ascertain, are "known" to have placed themselves in work. Even at its best this amazing return calmly assures the public that, ignoring fractions of men, out of every nineteen ex-soldiers of the type mentioned, eight were able to "make good" in civil life without the least assistance from any employment society. I wish I could think so, but some twenty years of first-hand experience of the ex-soldier problem, added to as much study and thought as I could bring to bear on it, compel me to answer one generalism with another by stating that this item of 8607 ex-soldiers "known to have themselves obtained employment" in the course of a single year, is easily the record example of statistical window-dressing I have ever seen in any departmental report issued to the public, which is indeed saying a very great deal.

It is, however, rather transparent, is this "known" item in the account, and if any business man saw it he would at once, and quite correctly, place it in the same category as an inflated figure set against "good will" in the balance sheet of a shaky company. But he would fail to understand that the "grand total" includes instances, by no means rare,

of the same man obtaining several situations during the year from different societies, possibly even from the same society ; all of which are reckoned separately as good enough for inclusion in the official total of “ The number of men for whom employment was found.” Sir Ian Hamilton has told us something about the value of such “ employment,” but we can gain a better idea of its real worth from a previous annual report of the largest society whose work figures in the “ grand total.” Two or three years after the end of the Boer War, when it is not unfair to assume that employers as a class had a kindly thought for “ the gentleman in khaki,” this society, through its London office alone, placed 1092 men in “ permanent employment ” at an average weekly wage of £1, 4s. 8d. Such “ permanent employment ” is defined as follows in the rules of that society: “ Employment will be classified as ‘ Permanent ’ or ‘ Temporary,’ according to the definition of the employer: it will further be defined as ‘ Permanent ’ when the employment lasts over three months, or is of a nature that a man can retain for a period not limited ; as ‘ Temporary ’ when the employment is terminable within three months of its commencement.”

I do not propose to comment on the foregoing extracts from the annual report of the

society in question, but will hark back to that "general total" in the 1911 War Office report, which is my "selected target" at the moment. On the face of it, there can be no doubt that this total conveys a distinct impression that 19,880 billets were available for 18,385 ex-soldiers, and as no other men are mentioned in connection with the return, a casual non-technical reader might well be pardoned for concluding that 18,385 men comprised the sum total of those who returned to civil life during the year. A more careful reader might wonder what had happened to the men who left with characters less than "good" in a military sense, but seeing nothing concerning them anywhere near that "general total," he would naturally conclude that their number was immaterial, and their bearing on the ex-soldier problem insignificant.

But a trained observer of the concealed entanglements peculiar to all official reports will turn to pages 32 and 33, where, displayed in baffling tabular form, under the irrelevant heading, "Increase and Decrease of the Non-Commissioned Officers and Men on the Regimental Strength of the Army during each year from 1902," we see that 35,159 of the rank and file were struck off the strength during the year under review. Of these, 744 died, 403 purchased their discharges before com-

pleting three months' service, 903 were discharged as "not likely to become efficient soldiers," 72 for "false answer on attestation," 263 for "misstatement as to age on enlistment," 303 "services no longer required," 1762 discharged "with disgrace," 3019 "struck off as deserters," 346 transferred to the Permanent staff of the Auxiliary Forces, and 4335 Indian Native troops were struck off on return to their own establishment after having been loaned to us for garrison and expeditionary purposes. This gives us a total of 12,150 men who cannot be reckoned as "ex-soldiers" by a fair and reasonable interpretation of the word in an equitable sense; and by subtracting this total from the total struck off during the year, we see that the true number of ex-soldiers who came back to civil life was 23,009, of whom but 18,385 are dealt with in the section headed "CIVIL EMPLOYMENT," which includes that famous "general total." Therefore, no less than 4624 men are quietly ignored in one year, mainly because, under an unjust character assessment system, now obsolete, they did not happen to have a certain official label attached to them on their return to civil life. But they took with them mouths to be fed, bodies to clothe, feet to be shod, and all the human elements which go to the making of the ex-soldier problem.

In a previous chapter I stated that "every wrong method of meeting the national responsibility towards the ex-soldier has been exploited with amazing effrontery in spite of an appalling record of fiasco and failure," which is about as near what I should really like to say as any respectable firm would care to print and publish. But in face of the facts and figures I have quoted, can any man with red blood in his veins say that I let myself go too far, or that the War Office, on the strength of its own official report, does not merit a medal as big as a frying-pan for "amazing effrontery"?

This sort of thing must stop. After the war, the nation will be in no mood to listen to fairy tales about "men known to have themselves obtained employment," nor will the country be bamboozled by "General Total" and his staff. The War Office cannot be allowed to play the fool with any more ex-soldiers, and cook its official reports to cover its failure. We have dissected an official report which, as I have clearly shown, is a tissue of deliberate misrepresentations regarding the ex-soldier, and if the War Office intends to rely on similar *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* in future, it had better remember that the truth concerning the ex-soldier problem is very well known. There is that report of the

Commission on the Poor Law, and, in addition, I can counter these War Office "terminological inexactitudes" by the following extract from *The Unemployable and the Unemployed*, by J. B. Paton, M.A., D.D.: "Many of the unemployed are Army men, who, on leaving the Army, find themselves without employment. Those of them who received a training in their youth for some definite trade have lost much of their skill during the seven years of Army service. Probably a number equally great entered the Army who had no such training, and who, when they leave the Army, can only seek employment as unskilled labourers, competing with others of that class." Further on our author refers to these ex-soldiers as an "ever-flowing source of the unemployed in our country, many of whom unhappily drift into the tramp and vagrant class." Quite so, but to read the War Office reports one would think that an out-of-work ex-soldier was rare indeed, and, when found, was presumably unemployable owing to his own faults. This is the "slurring over" to which I object so strongly, and I do trust that the great British public will support me by discounting every "return" made by the War Office regarding the ex-soldier problem, and opposing any attempt to meet the needs of the men by the creation of a "War Office Employment Department."

CHAPTER IX

WAR OFFICE METHODS

I THINK we may take it as proved that whatever the War Office can do, it cannot handle the ex-soldier problem. This point is of peculiar significance because, owing to the close relationship between recruiting and the ex-soldier's position, the military authorities, without admitting any definable responsibility in the matter, are naturally anxious to have a dominating interest as regards what is done to provide employment for ex-soldiers. They have obtained this during the past in two ways, directly and completely so far as their own official endeavours to employ men are concerned, and indirectly and incompletely by subsidies to outside employment societies; of which a grant of a thousand a year to one particular association is the only item worth mentioning.

The result has been bad all round, and worst of all for the ex-soldier; yet what else could be expected owing to the very nature

of things? The War Office is essentially a military organisation, discipline is its very soul; it "sayeth unto this man 'Go,' and he goeth": and it is so far a success that it has accomplished many truly wonderful things during the world war; things which would astonish some of those "drefful" superior people who can never mention the War Office without a cheap and passing sneer. But the measure of its failure is almost invariably in strict ratio to its loss of disciplinary control; it could not order men into the ranks, therefore we had recruiting difficulties; it cannot order employers to give jobs to ex-soldiers or compel men to take work they do not like; and its failure to solve the ex-soldier problem follows as a natural and inevitable result.

Whatever it may wish to do, the War Office is fundamentally a corporate body which can only exist by continually insisting upon an underlying principle which cannot apply to the ex-soldier problem except to a very limited extent; and as regards the routine and methods by which it transforms its principle into action, well, they may or may not be the best possible when dealing with soldiers and all things entirely military, but they are most assuredly rather worse than useless for any other purpose. If a thing has to be done, and

the War Office has time to prepare a system, and power to enforce it, then it is certainly not the least efficient of our departments of State. But if the task is one which cannot be well reduced to a hard-and-fast system, or has to be done semi-voluntarily and at short notice, or is so novel that no existing precedents bear on it, then the War Office, both in principle and method, is apt to make a ghastly mess of things.

A time often comes in the affairs of officialdom in general and the War Office in particular, when, as Colonel Sir W. F. Butler wrote in his *Campaign of The Cataracts*, the effective completion of a stipulated task in a given time is only possible if—"From the moment 'off' is spoken, all the countless pegs by which the science of government pins down the effort of the individual atom be for a time removed, or loosened, so that a line can be run straight through the densely crowded streets of the great city of 'Departmental Administration.'"

That is true, I have proved it by personal experience, and here goes to tell how the deed was done. When the British Army recruiting film was completed, for which I wrote the original narrative synopsis (and which I had the honour and pleasure of producing and arranging with Captain F. Keith Jones, Managing

Director of Messrs. Keith Prowse, to whom I hasten to credit a good deal more than a half share of the undoubted spectacular and recruiting success of the film), the powers that be were so delighted with the preliminary shows in private, and so pleased with the Royal approval evidenced after a command performance at Sandringham, that it was resolved to give the film a worthy send-off on its first exhibition in public. Keith Prowse at once came down handsomely and patriotically as regards the sinews of war. They gave me a free hand and a blank cheque, only stipulating that the opening show was to be given by invitation to as many officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and men as the Palace Theatre could hold; that the military were to be entertained on a "hang the expense" scale, and that invitations were to be spread as fairly as possible among representatives from those units of every branch of the Service who had done so much to make the film a success.

I went ahead without a thought of the speed limit, and in due course special trains were arranged for, luncheons ordered, and everything prepared to give all ranks a good time as some slight acknowledgment of what they had done for us. Greatly to my personal delight, the late Lord Roberts stated his intention of

honouring the show with his presence, an example which was followed by practically the whole of the Army Council, many generals, staff officers, and, last, but by no means least, well over a thousand of the rank and file were coming up. Then a happy thought struck me. The men were all coming in the full glory of their smartest "walking-out" uniforms, so why not march them through London from Waterloo to the Palace Theatre, and thus allow Londoners to see a miniature edition of the whole British Army? This idea found favour all round. A band of a battalion of infantry was specially invited up from Dover, and on the Wednesday, as "the day" was fixed for the following Friday, all my arrangements were complete, even to passing the "table plan" for a lunch at the Trocadero to some two hundred and fifty officers and other specially invited guests.

Then came the bomb—a real snorter from the blue. I was rung up from Aldershot, and a senior staff officer said, "Look here, Clifford, it's awfully nice of your people to ask us to see the film and all the rest of it, don't you know, but who is authorising this march through London? We are sending hundreds of men from here, and I am sure they will have the time of their lives, but when it comes to marching them through

London, well, that's a military matter, you know ; and I am afraid we cannot go on unless it is duly authorised. The General spoke to me about it this morning, and although he hasn't the smallest objection, yet he wishes to see the thing in proper order before we can carry on with that march."

"Very good, sir," I replied. "I will report to the War Office and 'phone you again later."

Here was a nice fix. The march, the centre-piece for the day, my special pet, was in grave peril. I hastened to the War Office in a taxi, and soon found myself in the presence of a very influential personage indeed. He listened to my story, and said, "This looks awkward, Clifford. We don't wish to stop you or hinder you in the least, but the fact is that I could not get written authority for that march, which is what the Aldershot people want, in less than a week, and it might take longer."

I thanked the gentleman and withdrew. It was no use arguing the point, as I knew quite well that he was as keen on the march as I could wish, but perfectly helpless in an official sense as part of a departmental machine. This, however, was not very helpful. Something had to be done, and done at once, or that march was doomed. I entered an adjoining apartment, a sort of waiting-room, I think, grabbed a telephone, and was through to the

Aldershot office in quick time. Then, summoning my best official manner, I asked for the staff officer who had spoken to me less than an hour before, and as soon as I heard him at the other end, I said, "It's all right about that march, sir, the men can do it. I am speaking from the War Office, and it has just been sanctioned here."

This was, shall we say, jesuitically correct? I was in very truth speaking from the War Office, and I had no doubt that the men, many of them accustomed to long route marches in full marching order, could "do" the mile or so from Waterloo to the Palace Theatre without risk of serious injury to their stamina and constitutions. As for the "sanctioning," I could vouch for that, as "alone I did it." There was no one else on the premises who seemed equal to the job at such short notice, so for one glorious tick of crowded life I constituted myself the Army Council in full dignity assembled, and "sanctioned" the march on my own initiative and responsibility.

It came off all right, too, as the papers duly chronicled, even to the extent of full pages of illustrations; and what a day it was, to be sure! Afterwards, on the strength of this "War Office precedent," any number of similar marches were held in connection with

displays of the Army film all over the country, and recruits galore were brought in, especially for the Territorials.

Now, alas! one of the principals concerned lies in a soldier's grave "somewhere in France," while the other is in a position of such strength that the telling of this true story can only make him chuckle vastly, as I have no doubt he will, especially as I have rather more than a shrewd notion that he saw through my little game in a flash, but was too fine a gentleman to spoil a good thing when, by blinding his official eye, he could allow it to go on. As for myself, I'm frankly and hopelessly unrepentant. As far as this world goes, I am certain that the end justified the means, and as for the next, well, I am content to leave it where Sterne left Uncle Toby's oath.

After all, however, the main point connected with this incident is that it affords additional proof, if the same is required, of the lack of adaptability inseparable from War Office methods when they are brought to bear on new things; and as the ex-soldier problem simply bristles with constantly varying conditions, it is not a favourable medium in which to display Whitehall to advantage. Undoubtedly the War Office has highly essential work to perform on behalf of ex-soldiers, but it must carry out such work as

part of special machinery created to meet the needs of the men, and not as a controlling or directing force. It has been suggested to me that after the present conflict the War Office will be so changed that it will scarcely know itself, and that it may therefore be advisable to make the employment question virtually a department of this reformed War Office. This argument leaves me stone cold, for does not Kipling tell us :

“As it was in the beginning
Is to-day official sinning,
And shall be for evermore.”

I think Kipling is the man to follow on this track, and when it comes to talking about another and a better War Office taking over the ex-soldier problem, I much prefer to ponder, as did the raven of Poe, and say, “We have had some—Nevermore !”

It is the more necessary to keep the War Office from muddling things because it apparently has a plan of its own pet design which it intends to inflict on the men when the war is finished. At any rate, the Paymaster-General has stated in the House of Lords that, among other things, the War Office proposes to give the men

(1) Working furlough on usual conditions of full pay and allowances for the period of

four weeks, during which separation allowances will continue to be paid.

(2) Travelling warrants from the place of disbandment to the home districts.

(3) Money gratuities for service awards, on a scale hereafter to be fixed.

(4) Insurance policy against unemployment valid for one year.

(5) Assistance in finding employment.

(1), (2), and (3) are in no sense new, they are merely what the men have a right to expect as a matter of departmental routine. As regards (4), much will depend on the conditions of the policy, and a great deal more on the amount the out-of-work ex-soldier will receive—I'll warrant it's something well under a pound a week. Regarding (5), War Office “Assistance in finding employment”—this is not worth a snap of the fingers except as a subsidiary section of an effective organisation for handling the whole problem, and if such “assistance” means that the men are to rely on its direct effort and value, then all I have to say is, that they would be better off without it.

CHAPTER X

DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

THE Board of Trade is another public department which has been nibbling at the ex-soldier problem. I suppose the Labour Exchanges were anxious to strengthen their position by showing what they could do for the men better than it had been done before, doubtless with a view to taking the whole thing over eventually as a species of departmental side line. Be this as it may, I know that at one time the Board of Trade had an ex-officer very busily engaged in London in seeing what could be done for ex-soldiers, and several interviews with officials regarding the policy of my *Soldiers' Employment Gazette* convinced me that the department was taking a live interest in the ex-soldier question. And I am glad to acknowledge that I saw every evidence of a keen desire to do all that was possible for the men. The officials, too, struck me as competent men who had made a great study of the varied conditions of the

labour market; their method and system appeared excellent, as far as I could judge, and I certainly found them responsive to new ideas and willing to talk things over in a business-like way, without trailing a tangle of red tape over any proposition.

But, rather reluctantly, I was compelled to conclude that the Labour Exchanges could not meet the peculiar requirements of the ex-soldier as a class. To them an ex-soldier is neither more nor less than any other man seeking work. They cannot, dare not, give him the least preference, or evince special effort on his behalf, unless such effort could be made without the least detriment to the normal functions of the department. In other words, the existing exchanges and methods, although very valuable indeed up to a certain point, cannot be accepted as meeting more than a small portion of the ex-soldier's claim in equity. Nor does it appear that any feasible change in their mode of working would enable them to do more than this; as modification, if material enough to ensure appreciable results, could only lead to the creation of a department within a department, which is far indeed from the machinery we must have to cope with the ex-soldier problem. It by no means follows, however, that the Labour Exchanges are to be ignored. Not

so, they will prove extremely useful as sectors of the plan we have to organise ; the point is that the Board of Trade, like the War Office, can never hope to be in command when the plan is put into operation.

It is very necessary to keep this in mind, as, during the war, the Board of Trade Labour Exchanges and the War Office have been working together on behalf of disabled or invalided men in a manner likely to lead to serious misapprehension in future. When such men are discharged, the War Office informs the Labour Exchange people, who register the men, and slip them through the departmental machinery. I am happy to say that many men, some thousands, I believe, have been given a fresh start in this manner after discharge as "medically unfit" for military service. This is quite good, but it will do the ex-soldier a terrible amount of harm if it leads up to the delusion that the War Office and the Board of Trade can handle the problem of the men. The fact is, that, at the moment of writing, I could place any number of disabled men in such work as they could do. There is no difficulty about it just now. Military employment societies have told me that they could find work for many more disabled men than they are able to obtain, and a friend of mine who was willing

to place at least half a dozen disabled ex-soldiers in congenial employment, found, to his utter astonishment, that, after advertising and taking a good deal of trouble, he could only get two men. The "reason why" of all this is not difficult to understand. In the first place, men waiting for the permanent assessment of their pensions are not extremely keen on taking work which may prove them to be wage-earners to an extent which will deprive them of no small portion of the pension they may have earned by their service and suffering. The men have very decided views on this point. They regard their pensions as compensatory on account of what they have endured, and feel very strongly that they should be pensioned without regard to their present earning capacity. On the contrary, the principle of the official view is that disability pensions should be made permanent according to a man's earning capacity when his pension is finally assessed. There is a great deal to be said for both points of view, and the fair thing, as between the pensioner and the tax-payer, demands that an equitable compromise should be arrived at, and the men pensioned accordingly. This is another strong reason in favour of that Pensions Appeal Board, as, on their past record, it is out of the question to leave the

matter entirely at the discretion of the Pension Commissioners. The above condition of affairs tends to keep many disabled men off the labour market altogether, or to make them very lukewarm in their efforts to obtain work or keep it if it is provided for them. Those who are not affected in this way can find work readily enough at the present time, first because employers are in a mood to stretch every point in their favour, and secondly because the military requirements of the nation have so denuded the labour market that employers are competing with each other for the services of the unemployables of normal times. Therefore, the War Office and the Board of Trade are placing men in work with a facility which is only attributable to a transient and most exceptional economic situation, added to an equally transient and exceptional situation as regards men who are "marking time" until their pensions are permanently assessed. It is most essential to keep these facts in mind, as they relate to a state of affairs which is sure to be advanced as a substantial argument in favour of handing the ex-soldier problem over to the War Office and the Board of Trade. In due course, no doubt, we shall be favoured with some amazing statistics showing how many men these Departments of State have placed in employ-

ment during the war, and an attempt will be made to present a case in favour of allowing departments which have done so well to "carry on" with the whole of the work which has to be done on behalf of the ex-soldier. And, as this can only result in a frightful muddle at the expense of the men and the nation, I am particularly anxious to discount in advance any official figures showing what "departments concerned" have done as regards placing military non-effectives in employment during the progress of the war.

My readers are by now well acquainted with facts and figures which prove that the War Office must be left to grind its military axe, and as, in addition to what I have already mentioned, we must not forget that Whitehall has the purely military lessons of the war to absorb,—a prodigious task,—it is abundantly clear that the War Office cannot take a leading part in whatever action may be necessary to solve the ex-soldier problem. As for the Labour Exchanges, one or two further points may well be urged to prove their inability to grapple with the problem except in an auxiliary sense. Their limitations are too great; it is not their business to *find* work for a single man, all they can do is to bring together employers and men who may be looking for each other. This is valuable work, and will

be indispensable during the first great rush after the war. But it must be supplemented by much strenuous and highly organised effort devoted exclusively to *finding* work for the men, or many thousands who are now fighting will be hard hit when they return to civil life. And in more normal times, which will assuredly return and bring their problems with them, the Labour Exchanges can do nothing whatever towards preparing serving soldiers for their return to the labour market, —a defect which, even if considered alone, is sufficiently serious to place the Labour Exchanges beyond the pale as *the* organisations for handling the ex-soldier problem.

Before quitting the various Government and departmental activities which have been displayed on behalf of ex-soldiers, it is essential to examine the work performed by quite a number of official Committees.

The record began in 1877, and ran on merrily until, in 1905, the late Lord Monkswell wrote as follows to the editor of the *Times* :

“SIR,—One of the last acts of the late Secretary of State for War was to present to the country a list of seven gentlemen who are to inquire at large into the problem of employment for discharged soldiers.

“The appointment of this committee may

be useful as affording a gracious indication to all whom it may concern that the late War Minister is alive to the importance of the question, but it cannot be alleged that the committee enters upon its task under encouraging circumstances. This is not the first time that the question has been considered and reported upon. Much larger committees, comprising persons of even greater standing than any of the seven, have already discussed and reported upon it, and it is difficult to imagine what good purpose can be served by setting men of lesser distinction to sit in judgment on the work of their betters. While the prospect of further enlightenment from such a proceeding would seem to be exceedingly remote, the snub administered to former committees is a very real discouragement to men of standing and ability who may be asked to serve on similar bodies.

“ In 1877, a Select Committee of the House of Commons, of twenty-one members, including Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Childers, and the present Lord Wemyss, reported on the employment of soldiers in civil departments of the public service, but the question of employment outside the public service was not within their terms of reference.

“ In 1894, another Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed, with a

reference covering every kind of employment, in essentials identical with the reference to the new committee of seven. This committee was originally composed of thirteen members, with Sir George Chesney in the chair, and to them were added the present Lord Selborne, Mr. Woodall, Lord Edmund Talbot, and Major Davis."

At this stage the letter branches off to deal with points unconnected with the plurality of committees, in which connection I may note that during the period covered by his lordship's remarks two Treasury Committees also sat and reported on the ex-soldier question. In 1883 one of these Committees reported in favour of employing Army and Navy pensioners in the outdoor and non-clerical branches of the Civil Service, and in 1891 the second Committee reported in favour of the appointment of retired soldiers and sailors as office-keepers, messengers, etc.

The Committee of seven, against the appointment of which the late Lord Monkswell protested as superfluous, was made up as follows: Sir Edward Ward, Chairman; Major-General Lord Cheylesmore; Colonel W. Elliot; Paymaster-in-Chief C. E. Gifford, R.N.; Sir Frederick Harrison, general manager, London and North-Western Railway; Sir George

Livesey, chairman, South Metropolitan Gas Company ; Major - General H. S. G. Miles ; Colonel H. A. Walsh ; and Mr. A. C. Pedley, Secretary. The terms of reference of the Committee were wide and comprehensive enough to cover the whole ground, and its report, published in 1906, may well be regarded as absolutely the last word on the subject ; and if only its recommendations had been carried out the ex-soldier problem would have been solved. Nevertheless, we had another War Office Committee a few years after, which sat to report more particularly upon what could be done to prepare serving soldiers for their return to civil life. I had the honour of giving evidence before that Committee. Later still, so recent that the war broke out before its report was issued, another War Office Committee sat to report on the most effective means of dealing with the ex-soldier problem, especially with regard to the co-ordination of existing employment societies, and I was again invited to give evidence before this Committee. At the same time, another official Committee of sorts sat simultaneously to deal with this truly eternal question. I flatly refused to give evidence before this Committee, although asked to do so by two of its members, one of whom made a special journey to London and had a long talk with me regarding my refusal.

But I told him, and still maintain, that this additional Committee was nothing more or less than a "departmental red herring" thrown out because the hounds of reform were baying at the throat of officialdom, and it appeared certain that unless a diversion could be created something would really have to be done, and, horror of horrors! a fair sum of money spent in bettering the lot of the ex-soldier.

During the war we have had Sir George Murray's Committee, to which I have already referred, and which was, of course, justified by the special needs of the disabled. This is the total, as far as I know, and it tells us that since 1877 no less than nine official and influential committees have tackled the ex-soldier problem.

What have these committees done? Look at what the Treasury Committees reported concerning the employment of men in State Departments in their 1883 and 1891 reports, and then turn to the 1904-5 report of the National Association for the Employment of Ex-Soldiers, the largest organisation of its kind we have, and in receipt of a Government grant of a thousand pounds a year. On page 9 we are told that "The Committee observe with regret the small number of ex-soldiers employed in Government offices, other than

the War Office, and express a hope that a more creditable state of affairs will ensue. As a matter of fact, even fewer ex-soldiers have been engaged during the past year than hitherto, and the Committee strongly endorse the following quotation from the Report of the Director of Recruiting and Organisation for 1904:

“In connection with this subject it will be observed that only nine appointments have been filled during the year in Government offices outside the War Office, while the number of ex-soldiers employed in Departments under the Government shows a material diminution. This question is not a new one, but it will not be satisfactorily solved until seriously taken in hand by Parliament. It is of vital importance for recruiting and for the attraction of a better class of recruit that employment shall be secured to deserving soldiers on leaving the Colours. In view of these facts it may be hoped that instructions will be issued that vacancies in Government Departments shall be filled by suitable ex-soldiers if possible, and only from outside sources when no suitable military candidate is forthcoming.”

“Only nine appointments” during a whole year—that is what the departmental despots-in-chief did for the ex-soldiers of a decade or

so past, and it also shows exactly what effect the reports and recommendations of these Committees have. Nobody takes the least notice of them; it is indeed marvellous how such mountains of paper can have produced such molehills of results; and I very much doubt whether there is in existence a more effective means of reducing a maximum of human intelligence and trouble to a minimum of practical result than that afforded by committees of the type which have dealt with the ex-soldier question during the past.

I would not have mentioned them at all but for the grave risk that we may have more of them after the war. More ex-soldier committees? I shudder at the thought.

If, however, any official thinks that another Committee should be appointed, I should like to inform him that such a Committee, although it will bring the total up to ten, might as well be largely supplemented. If further committee work is necessary, there is only one way to do it. Another War Office Committee should be appointed, a Treasury Committee, a Civil Service Committee, an Admiralty Committee, a Board of Trade Committee, a Board of Agriculture Committee, a Local Government Board Committee, and a Government Committee appointed by the Cabinet. All these Committees should sit at

the same time, take evidence, discuss and weigh it, and report in due course. Then, when the last of their reports is duly given to the world in its nice blue paper cover, the whole bundle should be taken to the Lunacy Commissioners to investigate and report upon. Nothing else is possible. As Martin Harvey might say, “It is the only way,” if we are in bitter reality to endure more committees on this pressing human need.

It appears, however, that the Government is not at present in the mood to appoint any more ex-soldier committees, for in the House of Lords the Marquis of Crewe turned down Lord Parker’s suggestion that a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament be appointed to consider the subject. Negatively, this is progress, if the paradox is permissible, as it shows that the authorities have no love for further committees, and that much waste of time and effort will therefore be avoided. This is welcome information, and I only wish it was not supplemented by the statement that “The subject of demobilisation had for more than a year been closely inquired into by competent members of the Civil Service.”

Demobilisation, of course, includes the ex-soldier problem, a subject “competent members of the Civil Service” know no more about than they do of preparing for war or

waging it. Goodness only knows what they have resolved upon, or where they are getting their ideas from, but judging from what the Civil Service has done for ex-soldiers during the past, I can only say that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find in the whole of the British Empire a body of men less likely to do justice to those who have served and fought. The fact of the matter is, that these Civil Servants in their official capacities are such creatures of routine that they cannot come to real grips with a live subject. Before they can move they must reduce their deliberations to a "report," which must be "approved," "passed," and so forth by sundry departmental big-wigs. Then a "system" has to be evolved, a "system" which must, first and foremost, insist upon the immediate creation of lucrative appointments for Civil Servants. In working, the "system" must provide for as many departmental committees or sub-committees as may be deemed necessary to make sure that a maximum of talking is done before any work is attempted, and also to relieve the aforesaid Civil Servants from the smallest direct responsibility. After this, provided ample allowance is made for tons of red-tape, any amount of useless ink-slinging, and unlimited "filing for reference," the Civil Service people can wallow along in their own

truly official style until the crack of doom ; but they will not do as much real work, useful work, as a tenth of their number of business men would do at a twentieth of the cost and in a fiftieth of the time. After many, many years, when outside agitation had rubbed many of the corners off officialdom, it is probable that "competent members of the Civil Service" might run a department fit to handle the ex-soldier problem. But we have no time to wait for this, The job has to be done properly and at once, which means that departmental diddlers must take up a position in rear of the strategic reserve and leave the welter of work to men who know what life is, what business means, and are therefore fit and proper persons to tackle a human problem.

These Civil Servants have extremely quaint notions about human problems. Years ago, I met one, now dead, who told me that for some months he had been engaged upon an investigation concerning the conditions of life among gipsies and van dwellers in general. He had consulted all sorts of authorities and received miles of reports from various fellow-officials, and, to his complete satisfaction, he had worked these up into a magnificent Departmental Report, the gist of which was that the children of these wanderers could be transformed into stay-at-home town dwellers if

caught young enough and educated highly enough.

This struck me as rather like a plan for the domestication of the progeny of golden eagles, but my friend was very cocksure about it. He overwhelmed me with statistics piled on statistics, reports hurtling after reports, and delivered such a full-dress bombardment with all his batteries of official knowledge that he left me with a singing noise in my ears.

Then, gently, almost timidly, I spoke a few words to him in Romany. I only know a few, a very few, but they were more than enough for my purpose. My friend looked at me as if I had suddenly taken leave of my senses.

"What is that you are jibbering about?" he asked.

"That's Romany," I said—"the tongue gipsies use. Don't you understand it?"

A red flush crept over his face when he realised how neatly he was cornered. He knew nothing of Romany, of course he didn't, and he subsequently had to admit that he had never spent an hour among gipsies in his life, or travelled a single mile in a caravan. Yet he was a "competent Civil Servant" on the point of advising a Department of State as to the best means by which these children of the roads and wilds could be transformed into another type of men and women.

In the same way I should like to ask the Marquis of Crewe how many of these "competent members of the Civil Service" have ever served in the ranks of the Regular professional Army, or have ever worked for their living in that world of stress and strife where the ex-soldier has to earn his daily bread? What do they know of the conditions of life and labour, and what do they know of the soldier, past or present? They know what they have read, what they have heard, what they have been told, or what has been "officially reported" to them, and that's the limit of the contents of their knowledge box. They have no first-hand knowledge, nor are they fitted by education, training, sympathy, or sociological affinity to absorb outside knowledge likely to be of use in dealing with the ex-soldier problem. They are not the men for the job. The Right Hon. Will Crooks, Sir Hedley F. Le Bas, Sir Richard Burbidge, Sir Edward Ward, Mr. J. E. K. Studd, of the Polytechnic, Major Wilkinson, Comptroller of the Union Jack Club, the editor of *The Smallholder*, and the editor of *The Regiment* could tell the nation and the Government more in a couple of hours about the men who are fighting and what they want when the war is over, than all the "competent members of the Civil Service" could in every remaining minute of their natural lives,

CHAPTER XI

THE "HELP SOCIETY"

"IN approaching this part of our subject we feel it incumbent upon us, in the first place, to record our high appreciation of the work done by the existing societies, and of the keen interest evinced by those responsible for their management, which have contributed in no small degree to the success they have attained. They have been the means of securing employment for thousands of men who, but for their efforts, would have found it difficult, if not well-nigh impossible, to obtain opportunities of earning their living on completing their Naval or Military service, and it is only right that we should make this point perfectly clear before we proceed to make proposals which, whilst they may appear to strike at the roots of the separate existence of the various societies, only commend themselves to us because they seem calculated to further the objects which the societies referred to have severally in view."

The above extract from the report of Sir Edward Ward's 1905 Committee will serve to show the general trend of my personal opinion of the separate working of the societies I am about to describe. In spirit and intention their efforts are beyond criticism; their officials do their best with systems and methods usually imperfect and faulty; struggle bravely on in spite of totally inadequate financial support, and have achieved results which are most creditable when compared with the means by which they were produced. But, in spite of this, these societies, viewed as corporate bodies and considered as distinct means working towards a common end, must take their individual share of the ghastly record of failure outlined so clearly in the Poor Law Report, and so familiar to all who have real first-hand knowledge of the truth of the ex-soldier problem.

I will commence with the Incorporated Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, founded 1899, incorporated 1901. This society does charitable work, of which the following, taken at haphazard from its own records, may be accepted as typical: "Robert Case, native of Suffolk, of 84 Suffolk Street, Norwich, late Private No. 1943, in the 6th Regiment of Foot, was discharged on 17th September 1878, at his own request, with a total service of

nineteen years and nine months, a 'Very Good' character, four good conduct badges, and the medal for good conduct and long service. Aged 62. The Society undertook to pay his rent, and allowed him 9d. a week for fuel and light until his death." An adjoining case tells of an old Dragoon Guardsman, who went through the Afghan campaign of 1879-80, served for twenty-one years, and finished up with a life pension of a shilling a day. "Lives," says the report, "in cottage at Great Yarmouth, at rental of 3s. 6d. a week. The old soldier is too weak to work, but his wife can earn a little by dressing poultry. The Society pays 4s. 3d. a week rent, and 9d. for fuel and light."

Taking these cases as they stand, and with the passing remark that they are a disgrace to the nation in general, and the Pension Commissioners in particular, I freely admit that the "Help Society," as it is called in the Service, did excellent work by relieving the wants of those poor old soldiers whose condition was so truly deplorable. But it is undeniable that such work is entirely charitable, and with all the emphasis in my power, I insist that no society undertaking such work ever ought to handle the employment of ordinary ex-soldiers in any shape or form. It is a direct infringement of that right in equity

which belongs to my class ; it approximates far too closely to asking for work as a favour, nay, more, as a charity ; and I have no hesitation in saying that as regards the ex-soldier employment problem, the "Help Society" has done much more harm than good, in spite of the imposing totals regarding employment published in its annual reports. Its sadly mistaken efforts have tended to lower the social position of every soldier who has left the British Army since the Society started ; it has made him appear more or less unemployable unless a kind-hearted employer will give him a chance,—much as he might an ex-convict,—and I cannot protest too strongly against such a demoralising and degrading endeavour to find work for the men.

I know just how bad it is, for I have grappled with it at first hand. The "Help Society" published a large volume,—*For the Use of Office-Holders on the Business of the Society*,—containing, among other items, the names and addresses of some ten thousand "friends" scattered all over the country for the purpose of helping men to obtain employment, or "helping them on the road," as the case might be ; the good people who run the Society seeming to consider it quite in order that charity and employment should go hand in hand together. Personally, this volume

of nearly a thousand pages, and strictly limited circulation, struck me as rather a weird way of telling the ex-soldier where his "friends" might be, but as I happened to have a copy in my library, I was not in such a quandary as the average ex-soldier might have been.

Turning up the county in which I lived, I selected a few "friends" not too many miles away, and, arming myself with that masterpiece of an "Exemplary" character the fates and the Army conspired to bestow on me, I put myself inside an old suit of clothes, commandeered a pair of boots the wife had set apart as "too far gone to be worth mending," and with a nondescript scarf wrapped round my neck, I walked to a station where nobody knew me, and entrained for the scene of operations.

Then my adventures commenced. A walk through the streets of a sleepy, old, small country town, just far enough to give me a travel-stained appearance, brought me to the house of the first "friend," who was a parson of the established church, living in a snug vicarage, which stood well back from the hot and dusty road. It was quite a welcome change to walk up the trim garden path, and rest the eyes on the cool shade thrown athwart the lawn by a sombre cypress. I went to the side door, and after one of the servants had quite satisfied herself that I was not likely

to help myself to a bunch of flowers from the garden, she left me temporarily, standing on the doorstep, while she found her master—the "friend" I sought.

He came at last, looking very worried and abstracted, as if I had interrupted him at about the "eighthly" in the composition of his next Sunday's sermon, and sizing me up at a glance, asked what I wanted. I explained my errand, telling him that I was an ex-soldier in want of work, which was true enough (for I was a free-lancing journalist at the time), and asked him whether he could place me in any employment. Then I paused, produced my talismanic "Exemplary" character, and left him to peruse it while I waited for his decision.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "It is indeed sad to see men like you tramping the countryside looking for work, but I fear I can do nothing for you, my good man. Work is very scarce in this locality just now, the farmers have many more men than they want, and I earnestly advise you to try elsewhere as soon as you can. I am sorry I cannot help you on your way, but the many claims of my own poor in this parish leave me without funds to assist strangers, much as I should like to give you enough money to take you to the next town."

This concluded my interview with "friend" number one, who, good man, was evidently not in a position to follow the dictates of his kindly intentions; and as I trudged along the dusty highway I wondered whether it would be a case of better luck next time. My route took me right out into the open country, where scattered groups of cottages were few and far between, farms lay wide apart, and good-class residential properties stood here and there on choice sites. One of these eminently desirable residences proved to be the domicile of the retired colonel who was next on my list of "friends."

It was quite a route march from the road to the back door of the semi-mansion I soon discovered the place to be on a closer view, and feeling rather like a lost hero of romance at the portals of an enchanted castle, I rang the bell and waited.

A pert and perky maid-servant answered my ring, and demanded my business with a toss of her head which sent her snow-white cap and streamers all of a waggle.

"Is your master at home?" I asked.

"Yes," she snapped, with another jerk of her head.

"Can I see him?"

"What for? Who are you? What is your business?"

These questions came at me like bullets from a machine gun, so I put on a bold front and said, "Oh, tell your master that one of his friends has called to see him."

The girl looked hard at me, as well she might, and went back into the house without another word. I know not what she may have told her master, but I can vouch for it that he put in an appearance in remarkably quick time. He was a typical old colonel, with a reddish bronze face tinted by much exposure to tropical sunshine in his soldiering days, golf and hunting since, and good living all the time. His eyes betokened a liverish temper, his white moustache bristled as fiercely as a chevaux-de-frise, and his walk betrayed a tendency to gout. He eyed me up and down as if I was on parade for his inspection, and said, "What game is this? You are no friend of mine. I have never seen you before in my life."

"But I believe you are a friend of mine, sir," I replied meekly, in a tone worthy of the first soft answer that ever turned away wrath. "An official friend, may I say?" I continued, "as I think you are on the list of 'friends' appointed by the Help Society. I want a job, sir, and shall be very glad if you will give me one."

"Job—job!" he repeated, in his best old

orderly-room manner. "Who are you, pray, that you should come to me for work?"

"An ex-soldier, sir, with an 'Exemplary' character and over seven years' service."

"Ah, that's it, is it? That's what comes of the confounded short-service system. In my young days in the Service, begad, we had no men like you tramping about looking for work. We made soldiers of you, real soldiers; why, damme, man, in my old regiment we looked upon a man as a mere youngster until he had ten years' service—we did indeed. But I can't give you a job, and don't know anyone who can. There's no work in the country, and what else can you expect with these confounded rads and socialists in power, strikes all over the place, taxes enough to ruin a man, and the whole country going to the dogs at a devil of a pace?"

"Good-day, sorry to have troubled you, sir," I replied.

"Don't cut and run like that, my man! What was your regiment?"

"The Royal Artillery, sir."

"Ah, the Gunners!—a very fine body of men. Where are your papers? Perhaps I may be able to help you."

I handed him my discharge documents. He had to hold them close to his face and step out into the light to read them,—his eyes were

not so good as they used to be,—and he had all an old officer's dislike of glasses for public wear.

“I see you purchased your discharge!” he exclaimed, rather sternly; “and now you have come down to this. What a silly thing to do instead of serving on for a pension.”

“It may have been, sir, but it can't be helped now, and I should be glad of some suitable employment.”

“I dare say, but I cannot do anything for you in that direction. Here's half a crown for you,—don't spend it on beer,—and you can have a square feed in the kitchen before you go.”

“That's very kind of you, sir, but it does not happen to be what I want.”

The worthy old officer looked at me as if I was the eighth wonder of the world, and without giving him time to recover from the shock, I touched my cap and departed.

I took to the road again, and was very glad of a lift on a passing farm waggon. As we jogged along my mind ran on many things, and a queer kink of thought set me envying the facility with which Gil Blas tumbled from one fat secretarial post to another, and my mood was such that I do not think I would have sniffed at Sancho's island for the time being. These idle fancies killed the time until the carter stopped his horses with a droning “Whoa!” and pointing with his whip to a

trim house, said, "There ye be, that be ther place ye want."

I thanked him, clambered down, and found myself looking curiously at a house which appeared as spick, span, and perfect as a kit laid down by an old soldier in those pre-Boer War days when kit-showing was one of the supreme tests of the military abilities of yours truly and about a couple of hundred thousand more of us who wore the Queen's uniform, God bless her memory! There was a tessellated path, flanked by neat rims of tiles set edgeways, which led to a front door, and on that front door a polished brass letter-box and knocker winked and blinked in the sunshine as if heliographing to each other. A flight of stone steps, white as loaf sugar with much hearth-stoning, led up to the door, which was faced by a broad stone landing, on which I could see a square mat arranged with the precision of a line of guardsmen, while on each side of the landing there ran a low stone wall, painted a glaring white, spotless as a fresh snowdrift, and faced by a couple of square pedestals, on which were poised two large pots containing evergreen plants, each so much alike that it looked as if every leaf had been counted and the pair balanced to a bud.

I at once decided that a frontal attack on that door would be thundering bad tactics, and

executing a strategic movement to the rear *via* the right flank, gave the servant's bell a soft push which was first cousin to that rap of the "poor relation" immortalised by Charles Lamb, and waited.

It may have been the servant's day out, but whatever the reason, the lady of the house answered my ring. She was an angular old maid, with a bust built on the lines of the front of a dress shirt belonging to a man on the thin side, a complexion sallowed by overmuch tea drinking, severe eyes, hair brushed straight back from a forehead and a half, and lips which looked as if they never had been kissed and certainly never would be. Altogether, she had no great need to hide herself if ever her neighbourhood was raided by a mixed force of Uhlans, Bashi Bazouks, and horse Indians, and she regarded me with that awesome look which the landlady bestoweth on the boarder who has been expecting a remittance by every post for best part of a month.

I felt half inclined to run away, but managed to blurt out something about my condition, and finished with a really moving appeal for work.

"Ah! that dreadful drink," she said, "that dreadful drink—how it does ruin the lives of you poor old soldiers! Why don't you sign the pledge, reform, make a new start in life,

shun strong drink like poison, and resolve never again to touch a drop as long as you live ? ”

I hastened to assure the virtuous creature that I happen to be, perhaps for my sins, a life abstainer who has missed all the alcoholic joys and pains of mortal man. This brought her up short, she made a terrific attempt at a smile, and said :

“ I am so glad to hear that, and will give you a glass of milk before you depart. But I can offer you no work except in the service of the Great King. You must take one of my tracts away with you and read it when you have time ; that will show you a path to better things—it will teach you to serve Him who died for us all.”

I made no reply, I dared not, for my creed is that of the soldier who has a soul big enough to appreciate the best in any human heart, from that of a real soldier’s chaplain to “ our regimental bhisti, Gunga Din,” who—

“ For all ’is dirty ’ide,
Was white, clear white, inside
When he went to tend the wounded under fire. . . .
Though I’ve belted you and flayed you,
By the livin’ Gawd that made you,
You’re a better man than I am, Gunga Din.”

So, as I felt pretty certain that the good lady had less weight to carry than my handicap

in the next world stakes, I bade her a courteous farewell, and went on my weary way minus both the milk and the tract.

Less than a mile away I found another "friend," the last on my list. My notes told me that she was married, and when I halted at the front gate of a tiny semi-detached villa, one of a pair standing by themselves just clear of a row of labourers' cottages, I began to wonder what sort of a "friend" it could be who lived in such a modest establishment.

She answered my knock in person, and I saw a frail, white-haired, kindly, little old lady, with sorrow-saddened eyes set in a refined face, and that rare smile which tells of a brave spirit purified by the fire.

By now I had my story pat and ready to a word, and it did not take me long to tell it to the old lady. She listened sympathetically, and asked, "What was your regiment?"

"The Royal Artillery, madam."

"Come in. My husband and son belonged to that regiment. You are welcome to what I have in the house, but I fear I can do nothing to help you to find work."

I entered the modest front room, where she left me while she went away to bring some refreshments. I looked around the apartment, and on the walls I saw two life-size soldier portraits in oils. One was of a young Gunner

officer,—killed in the Mutiny,—her husband. The other, very like the first, was of another smart young Gunner officer,—her son,—killed many years ago in one of our “little wars.” This much I learned from inscriptions on the frames. A lump rose in my throat, I could not impose on such a grand woman, no, not even in the cause of first-hand investigation into a social problem, and, turning quickly, I opened the door as quietly as I could, and slipped noiselessly into the street.

I walked away so quickly and so far that I was well out in the country before a felled elm lying by the roadside offered me a rustic seat I was glad to accept with thanks. As I rested myself, I began to reckon up the total result of my having fallen among friends, and made a mental schedule on the same lines as the inventory boards the quarter-bloke used to worry over in my days in the Service.

It worked out like this : Friends—one, clergyman. Gave—sermons, one, with moral complete. Friends—one, retired colonel. Gave—lectures, one, well-meant. Offered—half-crown and meal. Friends—one, maiden lady. Gave—temperance lecture and sermon combined for general service as required, with moral complete. Offered—glass of milk, one ; tract, one. Friends—one, married lady. Gave—sympathy, could not stay for more.

That seemed to me to sum it up fairly well, but the work I sought was as far away as ever, and I was still puzzled to know just how that hefty volume published by the "Help" people could serve the turn of an out-of-work ex-soldier. Thinking thus, I saw a man approaching who might have stepped straight out of the pages of George Borrow. He eyed me professionally, and said, "'Ow's yer luck, mate?"

"Rotten," I replied. "Nothing doing anywhere."

"That's snide. Where yer kippin' ter-night?"

"Don't know."

"Like that, eh? Take my tip and turn in on the daisies, old sport. Don't push on and work it out in the big 'ouse over in the town. The labour marster up there's a swine, a proper pig, that's wot 'e is, an' that's the straight griffin from yer uncle, an' no bloomin' error."

"That sounds rather terrible; what do you advise me to do?"

"Dunno, ye're ser green, but if yer can cough up a spraser yer can kip with me in ther dawgs' 'ome. There's sure ter be tons of scran about."

Which, being interpreted, meant that if I had sixpence in my pocket I could pass the night in a common lodging-house, where, from the

brethren of the road, I could pick up enough food to save me from going hungry to bed.

This promised a further adventure, and signifying that I had the wherewithal, I formed up with the tramp, and in column of two we trudged on until evening brought us to a den of a place in a by-street on the outskirts of a small country town. My companion was evidently free of the house. He fumbled among his rags to find the coppers with which to pay for his bed, nodded knowingly to the deputy, and stared precious hard at me when I changed a whole florin to settle my bill in advance.

"That's the last piece of family plate," I assured him, as we passed into the big, low-pitched, dirty, smelly, badly lighted hole they called the kitchen. We were early arrivals, but others came in by ones and twos until the room was almost uncomfortably crowded. Then ensued a scene which beats my powers of description. Of living writers, only the genial "Dagonet" in his serious moods could do justice to it, and I am sure he will agree with me that the task would be best left to that master hand of the past which drew Quilp, Fagin, and the most fearsome specimen of a low-life burglar with bashing murder as a speciality that our literature can show.

All I can say is that, while Romany answered

unto "ginnels," while clouds of rank tobacco smoke mingled with Rabelaisian jests, while bloaters and rashers of bacon sizzled by the open coke fire, then and there I saw again that volume issued by the "Incorporated Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society." It was a standard work in a species of reference library of vagrancy belonging to the deputy, who, for a consideration, would allow mooching tramps on "the old soldier lay" to consult it and make their plans for exploiting the "friends" whose names and addresses were so obligingly given. I saw the volume, handled it, for the price of a screw of shag, and found that many of the names were marked with the mystic symbols of trampdom; esoteric signs of warning or encouragement, as the case might be.

This explained two things to me. First, one of the real uses of the volume in question, and secondly it showed why the "friends" I had visited were all more or less inclined to treat me as a casual tramp whose request for employment merely served to cloak his begging.

It may be contended, not altogether unjustly, that I did not give the "friend" system a chance, that I should have placed myself in touch with one of the "district heads," who would have sent me to a suitable "friend." There may be something in it, but very little, for when I was editing my *Soldiers' Employ-*

ment Gazette, I took the trouble to write to many of these "heads" and "friends" as well, asking them to help certain men to find work. Nothing ever happened worth mentioning, and I eventually abandoned the idea as not worth the postage and bother. I dare say that these worthy "heads" and "friends" act well enough as almoners, but as for helping ex-soldiers to get work, all the good they do is not worth the cost of printing the names of most of them, and the unconscious harm they do to employable ex-soldiers as a class is scarcely believable. They are usually people of position and influence in their part of the world, and their continual exploitation by frauds who know where the "friends" are who can be "touched" with unfailing success, conveys the impression that ex-soldiers as a class spend most of their lives looking for work they hope they may never find, in case it prevents a "friend" from helping them with a small donation.

The thing would be funny but for its tragic aspect, which was so bad that ten years ago the Incorporated Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society made open confession of its failure, and approached the National Association for the Employment of Reserve and Discharged Soldiers in a manner described as follows in the 1904-5 report of that Association: "The

Incorporated Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society approached the Committee during the year with a proposal to hand over their Employment Department to the National Association, but only on condition of their affiliation with the National Association. The suggestion was carefully considered, but the Committee unanimously decided that while fully appreciating the work done by the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society for the ex-soldier in sickness and in need, they could not entertain the idea of affiliation with a society whose aims were not identical with ours. The National Association, since its inauguration twenty years ago, has steadfastly set itself against giving alms in any form, its sole object being to obtain permanent employment for men of good character."

Quite so. The National has always known that nothing could be worse than to mix charity and employment in the manner the "Help" people have done with such deplorable results. Five years passed, and the problem came up again, as the following extract from the 1909-10 report of the National Association proves: "In December last a meeting of representatives of the National Association and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, presided over by Sir E. Ward, was held at the War Office, to consider what steps could be taken towards closer

co-operation between the two Societies. A draft agreement, drawn up by the secretaries of the two Societies, in accordance with the views expounded at that meeting, has been approved by our Committee, and is now being considered by the various representatives of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, on the broad lines that all employment work shall be dealt with by the National Association and 'Help' (other than employment) by the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, the two Societies working in touch with one another."

But as subsequent War Office reports show the "Help Society" credited as a separate organisation with finding employment for considerable numbers of men, it is evident that this undesirable duality persisted in spite of everything, and, as a matter of fact, it was in full working order when the war broke out. Furthermore, there is every indication that it will be continued at the end of the world war, as the "Help" people have special office accommodation for this very purpose!

CHAPTER XII

OFFICIAL AND OTHER EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE DISABLED

WHEN the war was well under way, the Government appointed a Disabled Sailors' and Soldiers' Committee, which, under the chairmanship of Sir George H. Murray, sat in the office of the Local Government Board, and its proceedings and report can be followed easily from the under-mentioned concise and accurate summary which appeared in the *News of the World*.

The Committee had to consider "Methods for restoring disabled men to health as far as possible. Provision of surgical appliances to alleviate their condition and increase efficiency; training to fit men for new occupations when unable to follow the old; suitable employment when they are in a position to accept it.

"Declaring the care of disabled men to be a duty devolving on the State, irrespective of pensions, the Committee urge that the State, with the valuable assistance of voluntary

institutions, should see that the men are restored to health as far as possible, and found such employment as their physical condition will permit them to undertake. Between the outbreak of the war and April 1915, 2874 disabled non-commissioned officers and men were discharged from the Army, and 103 petty officers and men from the Navy. They suffered from all manner of injury and disease, chest complaints having the greatest total with 302, of which 200 were tuberculous. The rate of discharge has jumped from 200 a month to 1000; and a total of 12,000 may be expected at the end of the year.

“At present, the responsibility of the authorities for the treatment of a disabled man ceases on his discharge, and the Committee recommend that in all future cases disabled soldiers and sailors should rely on the State for complete restoration whenever possible. Patients discharged from hospital often require prolonged or special after-treatment to fit them for some civil occupation, and the Committee consider they should receive this free of cost, where there is a reasonable prospect of restoration.

“In cases of tuberculosis the prospects of a cure are most favourable, because the disease is usually detected at an early stage. Where patients are insured persons, special arrange-

ments have been made by the Commissioners to admit them to civil sanatoria at the cost of insurance funds immediately after discharge; but where tuberculous soldiers and sailors are not eligible, the Committee suggest that the State should defray the cost of a man's treatment in a residential institution until he is cured or declared incurable. In those cases where active service has produced temporary unsoundness of mind, it is most desirable that a patient should be certified for an asylum only after, and not during, the period allowed for recovery.

"The present practice for the supply of artificial limbs is considered inadequate. Disabled soldiers receive them through Chelsea Hospital on the recommendation of their medical attendant, and the Naval authorities have made similar provision. Because, however, of the marked advance in orthopædic surgery during recent years, the Committee recommend that when an artificial limb is required for a soldier an orthopædic surgeon of repute should prescribe the particular kind of appliance, with special regard to the occupation which the individual intends to follow.

"Then comes the question of employment and training for a new trade. Where some disability prevents a man from following his former vocation, the Committee think he

should be given an opportunity to learn a new trade in the locality where he resides. Some responsible authority should determine the particular trade, and in London and the larger provincial towns, the work of training might be undertaken by the Education Committees through their polytechnics and technical institutes. No man, merely because he is classed for the purpose of pension as totally disabled, should be disqualified for training. An alternative to the provision of training would be to apprentice the disabled person to a willing employer. Arrangements should be made for registering every disabled man, on or before his discharge from hospital, at the Labour Exchange of the district to which he is going, with particulars of the occupation he desires to adopt.

“Here follow the Committee’s proposals for setting up the machinery to carry out the healing of the men as far as possible, training them in new work, and finding employment. They recommend the appointment of a Central Committee, under the direction of some existing Government Department, and charged with the duty of providing, through the agency of the appropriate department, suitable assistance for those who may require it. This Central Committee, working in close co-operation with the Labour Exchanges, would in-

clude representatives of the Admiralty, War Office, and principal Government Departments, National Insurance Committee, employers of labour, and trade unions. Scotland and Ireland should have subordinate or branch committees, under the control of the central body, who, while responsible for the general organisation throughout the kingdom, would have to delegate a considerable proportion of its work to local bodies. Where the number of disabled men in a given district is insufficient to warrant the creation of a local committee, the services of one or more residents might be enlisted in the interests of returning men. These local committees could be used eventually for the employment of ex-sailors and ex-soldiers, whether able-bodied or disabled. Any scheme for the settlement of soldiers on the land—a question, they say, of the utmost importance—is left by the Committee to the consideration of the proposed central organisation.

“It will be remembered that a Statutory Committee is to be set up by the Royal Patriotic Corporation to deal with the pensions of soldiers’ and sailors’ dependants, other than widows and children. The report of Sir George Murray’s Committee concludes with a suggestion that all the functions they have dealt with concerning disabled men might be undertaken by this Statutory Committee, who would

become the central body referred to. There would then be only one administrative authority for dealing with dependants' pensions and looking after the welfare of disabled men. Overlapping would thus be avoided, and the Statutory Committee of the Patriotic Committee, financed by the State, would cover the whole ground."

Statistically, of course, Sir George Murray's Committee was right off the target in its prediction of the probable numbers of disabled men, which will certainly be very much larger than is indicated by the figures quoted. But the Committee cannot be blamed for this, it only did its best with figures of the "general total" type supplied by departments concerned, and compiled at a time when the war was too young for any returns of this description to be of the least use as a reliable guide. The suggested provisions for the care and treatment of disabled men must be written down as in every way excellent, and it is interesting to note that Sir George Murray's Committee is evidently of opinion that the Chelsea Commissioners are not competent to provide suitable artificial limbs to men needing them. I hasten to endorse this; every atom of energy and ingenuity the Pension Commissioners possess will be taxed to the utmost in devising pension-paring dodges—they will be quite unable to even look at anything else.

When we come to the question of training men for employment and placing them in work, I am, in the main, in complete agreement with the recommendations of the Committee. But I do not agree with the allocation of executive power to the Statutory Committee of the Royal Patriotic Corporation. This Corporation, with its reputation during the past for sitting on more than a million of invested money and charging four per cent. for doling out the interest, a policy which has been attacked by some influential critics, is not imbued with the right spirit to deal with a sadly human problem such as this. Rightly considered, the needs of the disabled form an integral part of the ex-soldier problem as a whole, and should be handled by a department of an organisation set up to deal with every requirement of the ex-soldier. I have particular reasons for knowing that my present views on this point were shared by many members of Sir George Murray's Committee, but it was felt that a recommendation to this effect was perhaps outside the terms of reference of the Committee, and also that the urgency of the case demanded the speedy creation of a special and effective body, financed from public funds, to deal with the wounded and disabled before the problem became chronic. But for these considerations,

I feel sure that the Committee would have leaned towards the sounder and more scientific method. To me their report thus far savours of expediency more than anything else, and as the Government certainly did not take the thing up either financially or in any other manner in the time I feel sure the Committee had in mind, it follows that the main reason *for* handing the work over to the Statutory Committee lapsed automatically.

However, the thing has been done, and it is no use crying about "what might have been." The present position can be seen at a glance from the following extract from the speech the Prince of Wales delivered at the Local Government Board on 1st February 1916. Speaking as chairman of the Central Statutory Committee under the War Pensions Act, 1915, His Royal Highness said, as reported by the *Times* :

"It is the will of Parliament, expressing the will of the people, that pensions and allowances alike for widows and dependents and for the disabled should be given upon a higher scale than in any previous war or any other of the European countries taking part in this war. These pensions and allowances will be paid by the State as of right through the usual State Departments. But Parliament has gone farther ; it has said that that is not enough.

Beyond these State pensions it will be necessary, if we are to adopt the rule of 'equality of sacrifice,' to supplement these pensions in some cases, and if we are really as a nation to love and honour our stricken heroes, to see that they are provided not alone with pensions, but with some employment suited to their new and, perhaps, painful conditions, and if necessary that they receive a training to enable them to adapt themselves to these conditions.

"Now to ensure that throughout the United Kingdom the Government flat rate of pensions shall be supplemented in the cases where that flat rate would still leave the recipient in an intolerably hard position; to ensure that grants or allowances should be made in deserving cases which, for one reason or another, are not eligible for any State assistance; and further, to ensure that provision shall be systematically made for the health, training, and employment of disabled officers and men after they have left the Service obviously requires the conjoint effort of the State, the local authorities, and of the voluntary associations, and the setting in motion of a perfect network of machinery covering the whole country and capable of working in harmony until, after many years, the last victims of the war have ceased to need the aid of the nation.

HELP OF LOCAL COMMITTEES

“The scheme of Parliament is comprised in the Naval and Military War Pensions Act, 1915. It constitutes a central statutory committee,—over which I have the honour to preside,—and I may say I dare not have attempted this onerous task had I not felt that the great local authorities would give me their utmost support in this my first great public undertaking. It enjoins on this statutory body as its first duty the formation of influential local and district committees for every county and county borough and for every borough and urban district having a large population.

“In framing these committees, Parliament has specifically required that women and representatives of labour should be included, and that a substantial representation of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Families’ Association and of the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Help Society shall be found upon each committee wherever practicable. The scheme of Parliament in fact aims at bringing together into one fold of compassion, gratitude, and practical philanthropy all our resources, both national and local, in men, in women, and in money, in order that in the years to come those who have brought us victory and peace by their courage and self-sacrifice may never truth-

fully say, 'The country for which I have bled and suffered in the hour of our need cruelly neglected me and mine in the hour of our necessity.'

"It is not within my competence to offer you advice as to how to go to work to form your committees and to carry out your share of the patriotic duties devolved upon us all by Parliament. There are others here who can afford you advice, if advice is needed. I will only venture to make a few general observations.

"It never was intended by Parliament that the Statutory Committee (though its approval is required to any scheme for the local committee) should impose any hard and fast limitations of a uniform character upon the various local authorities. Just as counties and boroughs and other populous areas differ in many essential particulars, so we shall expect their schemes for this experimental work not to conform to any one pattern, but to present a considerable variety of features. After all, they can be remodelled in the light of a larger experience.

MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

"Again, it was never intended by Parliament that these supplemental pensions and this patriotic provision for our sailors' and soldiers'

training and employment should be wholly paid for out of State funds. Any State grants which may be made to us from time to time—and already the Chancellor of the Exchequer has promised to ask Parliament for one million to start us on our way—will, I hope, be used, in the wealthier areas at all events, to supplement and stimulate, not to supplant and suffocate, local effort and local generosity. It is mainly because of the magnitude of the problem as compared with any previous war, and because of the growing national consciousness, that the State has felt obliged to step in and secure that a national network of organisation shall be set up for this great national duty.

“To realise the magnitude of the present problem and the difficulty of coping with it by any voluntary effort, compare for a moment the figures showing the relative havoc in human limb and human life caused by this war up to the present time with the figures of the South African War :

The total number of all ranks killed in the South					
African War was	...	...	...	...	21,942
The total number of all ranks killed in the					
present war is	...	...	...	...	128,138
The total casualties in all ranks in the South					
African War were	...	...	...	...	44,876
The total casualties of all ranks in the present					
war are	...	...	...	...	549,467

“Formidable as is the problem when surveyed as a whole and in the mass, it becomes light and easily manageable when it is realised that each county and borough area will only have its own fraction to deal with.

“In conclusion, let me express my earnest hope that every county and every locality in which a committee is established will enter into a healthy and vigorous competition to secure with the co-operation of the State that not only shall there be no avoidable suffering in the households of sailors and soldiers living in their midst, but that every effort shall be made to compensate by the truest form of neighbourly kindness for any deprivations which have been caused by willingness on the part of these men to sacrifice life, health, and happiness at the call of their honour, their King, and their God. (Cheers.)”

Our soldier prince spoke well, his words ring true, they do him credit. But, without the smallest hint of disloyalty or disrespect, I cannot forget how soon the stirring words of Havelock became a dead letter, and I do trust that the words of our future king will be supplemented by such expenditure of public money and concentration of specialised and organised effort as may be necessary to effect the desired end. In the past, the work on behalf of the disabled, which now comes within the scope

of the Statutory Committee, has been performed almost exclusively by the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, a charitable organisation, a well-meaning society whose efforts, however, tended to confuse what should have been a clear-cut issue between the ex-soldier and the nation. I do not think the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society ever ought to have appealed for funds to train our maimed men.

Here, once more, I take my stand on the ex-soldier's right in equity, and maintain that he has a right to have this done for him at the cost of the State. Sir George Murray's Committee was with me to a man on this point, and I feel I cannot do better than repeat, as well as I can remember, exactly what I said to this Committee concerning it. I told the Committee that in my opinion the whole question simply turns on this—Is a disabled ex-soldier a fit object for charity or is he not? If he is indeed to appeal to the charitable, then why not give him a "beggar's licence," as our forefathers did, or set him up with a dog and a tin can if he happens to be stone blind?

I am very glad to see that my views on the matter have met with the support described by the Prince of Wales, and although I am still strongly of opinion that public money is animating the wrong type of machinery, and cannot approve of the scheme so far as it intends to

appeal to the charitable for financial support, yet I am glad to admit that it promises to be a very great improvement on the results obtained by the "Help Society," as it is called in the Service, after the end of the Boer War.

Some years after the end of the Boer War I happened to be at one of the big exhibitions,—at Earl's Court, I think,—and there I found a stall, presided over by a charming young lady, who asked me whether I would purchase some small article to "help the wounded." Her stall was loaded with toys, wicker work, and fancy goods generally, running up to fairly substantial pieces of furniture. I refused to purchase on principle, but brought away with me an illustrated eight-page leaflet, issued by the "Help Society," which is now before me, and tells us that the Society's scheme for "Disabled Men's Workshops"—"Compared with what it was in 1904 . . . has been considerably improved and extended, not only with regard to the quality of the work turned out, but also by the employment of more than twice the number of men. . . . Thirty-six men are now at work in connection with the London workrooms."

That is enough for me. Thirty-six men!—note the total. We had over forty thousand casualties in the Boer War, and, years after its end, this Society is rather preening itself because in its London workrooms it managed to train

and find work for thirty-six of that appalling total ; and I should like to point out that even this pitiful, pettifogging total included men wounded in China.

Obviously we cannot allow this sort of thing to occur again, and to drive this point home I will show what the fate of the disabled will be if they are left at all largely to effort of the same kind as that displayed during the past by the "Help Society." My point is made very clear by another extract from the leaflet already quoted. Here, among other similar cases, we read of "Private D., Northumberland Fusiliers, was shot at Klerksdorp, and, being taken for dead by his comrades, was used as additional 'cover,' with the result that he received eight bullets in his body, and lost most of his ribs. He now has to wear a very thick felt and steel waistcoat to keep him from collapsing. Carpentering, at which he was tried, proved rather too much for him, and he is now a basket-maker." Further on, of course, we read it is "earnestly hoped" that good people will send along the needful cash to put the thing on a sound financial basis.

I loathe this parading of the men's wounds in print, the thing sickens me. Don't tell me the "Help" people meant well. I know they did, no man knows it better. Mean well? of

course they did, that's the very devil of it—the path to the ex-soldier's ruin is paved with the good resolutions of other people.

The plain fact of the matter is, that these good folk made a slap-dash rule-of-thumb attempt to solve what amounts to a scientific problem, and their good intentions count for just as much as the equally good intentions of a Gunner officer would if he made a glorious mess of all his calculations and pitched his shells a few miles short or over. I submit that, apart from the humanitarian and equitable aspect, and that *is* leaving something out, the fullest utilisation of every effective atom of human effort which can be rescued from the human débris of this devastating war is a matter of vital interest to the State, and no more a fit object for charity than it would be to pass round the hat to collect the salary of the Prime Minister.

One point I wish to make very clear indeed. I have no quarrel with the "Help Society" on account of its administrative or executive methods on behalf of the disabled. Its officials are admirable, many of its methods are splendid, and whatever the future may hold for the disabled, the men will be the better for experience gained by the working of the "Help Society." I differ from the Society in principle, not detail. I take my stand on

a right in equity—the “ Help Society ” stands cap in hand on behalf of the men. That is all, there is nothing else I have to find fault with. I have no strictures to pass on the manner in which the “ Help Society ” *spends* its money, but I am dead against the method by which it *raises* its funds.

What is the real position at the moment ? Dangerously deceptive, pregnant with grave trouble in years to come, and not so many years either. I have already explained why there is no obvious problem at the moment as regards those discharged as disabled or otherwise “ medically unfit,” but, when we view the question as a whole, we have to remember that these men only constitute a fraction of those who are really and truly disabled. Many men are now serving, even in the fighting line, who, after being wounded, are “ usable ” again in a military sense, and the numbers of these men on “ home service ” or “ light duty ” must be enormous. Obviously, these men do not figure in the official returns as “ disabled,” and in a military sense their retention on the Colour establishment in this manner is justifiable enough. But the question we have to decide is—How many of these men are economic casualties—how many of them are disabled to such an extent or in such a way that they will not be able to resume their

civilian occupations? This total is very difficult to get at, even to guess at, especially as it increases with every passing hour of war, but in spite of its elusive nebulosity we must never forget that it is the true total of those who are "disabled." One thing is certain—it must be big, tremendous, and there is every indication that it will be appallingly great by the time peace is declared. Almost every employer of labour must know of cases of the kind I mean, he must know men who worked for him, and who, after wounds or other disabilities caused by military service, were patched up and returned to the ranks; and in many cases these employers know that such men will never be fit to resume the normal duties of their calling in time of peace. Similar knowledge is, alas! only too common in far too many homes right through the country. It is part of the price of the war, and we must pay it. A considerable proportion of these men will not be pensionable, although they are just as assuredly economic casualties as the armless, legless, sadly shattered heroes who have been discharged to pension. They vary in degree, of course. I am not trying to make out that these "usables" are as hard hit as the mutilated pensionables, but I do contend that every man who is so disabled that he cannot return to his work must come

within the scope of any scheme devised to adapt the disabled as a whole to fresh callings. This is only just, but it enlarges the scope of the work to an astounding extent.

What the inclusion of every "economic casualty" really means may be judged from the fact that, quite recently, early in 1916, to be exact, a gentleman who was in an exceptional position to know what he was talking about, assured me that up to date the total of men who were officially labelled as "permanently unfit" on account of the war was not a man more than twenty thousand. Frankly, this astonished me, and I still think it wants a lot of explaining away at a time when our published casualties are well over half a million. But the source from which I had it was so exceptional that I am bound to take the figure seriously, yet I think few will disagree with me when I say that it ought to be multiplied by four or five to arrive at anything like the true total of the "disabled" who are at present entitled to be reckoned as "economic casualties" in the sense I have described. Now, never mind what they may be called in official returns, these are the men who need special training and assistance to give them a fresh start in life, but at the moment there is precious little indication that they are ever likely to get it unless a big change

is made in the existing agencies intended to meet their needs.

Apparently the "Help Society" intends to "carry on" with its work in spite of the creation of the Statutory Committee, and, having regard to the composition of the latter body, and its relation to the Royal Patriotic Corporation,—that organised Scrooge of funded charity,—I cannot blame the "Help" people for their resolve. But such a position is a terrible thing for the men. At its best it can only result in much duplication and overlapping when attempting a task which would absorb every atom of earnest and concentrated effort which could be expended on it; and at its worst, which I anticipate, it will mean that officialdom, the dominating interest on the Statutory Committee, will content itself by doing as little as possible for the disabled because the "Help Society" is "covering the same ground." Here we have the genesis of something little short of a national calamity, and here's proof of it. In the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, issued in 1909, we find that a few years after the end of the South African War, the proportion of sick to healthy of "the ordinarily able-bodied males" who were tended in Poor Law medical institutions was highest among those whose previous occupation was, to quote the words

of the official report, "Defence of the country." This means that by the time the "economic casualties" of the Boer War had sunk into the body corporate of the nation, they were in such a condition of abject want that the Poor Law had to minister to the sufferings of many of them, so many that they provided the largest proportion of their class of pauper. This, mark you, when the "Help Society" was doing all it could by invoking the aid of charity to effect the economic salvation of these very men. But, there, I suppose very few people read that Poor Law Report—I wonder how many of the most ardent supporters of the "Help Society" have ever even looked at it?

The lesson is plain, and we must take it to heart at once. Whatever happens, the disabled must not be ground between the upper and nether stone of a State-supported body doing as little as it can at the behest of Treasury "economists," and the "Help Society" doing what it can with as much as it can get from the public. This will be a calamity. A "merger" must be effected in the best interests of the men, and although I do not consider it expedient that the "Help Society" should become part of the machinery of the Statutory Committee, yet there can be no question that it should look to that committee for its funds. Here is a grand

opportunity for the influential personages behind the "Help Society" to show that they know what is wanted and mean to have it. They have only to screw up enough moral courage and the thing is done. Instead of making any further appeals for charitable support, they should request the Statutory Committee to provide the requisite funds from the money granted by Parliament; and if they do not get the cash by means of a formal application, then they should come out into the open and say so, stating their case plainly for public opinion to decide it. They need have no fear of the result if action is forced on them in this way, and by working on these lines the "Help Society" can render magnificent service by keeping the Statutory Committee continually up to the scratch.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

THIS throws a terrible responsibility on the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, but I do not think for a moment that those responsible for its management will shirk it. I cannot imagine them preferring to rely on passing round the hat for ever in face of the facts I have mentioned in a previous chapter. The responsibility is too terrible—too awful. Think of it! Tens of thousands of men, with lungs lacerated by poison gas, with limbs shot away, with nerves racked to pieces, with, in short, their bodies bearing the ghastly imprint of every species of diabolical mutilation modern war can inflict. Think of them, and try to imagine what it must be like to face them with a sickly smile and a confession of well-meant failure. Think of turning many of them away unhelped because the public cannot be wheedled into giving enough to meet their needs, and, above all, reflect on the prostitution of the soldier's and sailor's right in equity this nauseating beg,

beg, beg really amounts to. It is impossible to think about it in sober earnest. Such a prospect is enough to haunt any man. I could not sleep at night if I stood in the shoes of those responsible for any such thing. Indeed, I could not rest by night or day. My sleep would be wrecked by visions like unto those of Dante, my waking hours full of phantoms more frightful than any De Quincey ever saw, and my prospects of a future life filled with a dire foreboding lest in some dread Glubbudubdrip I might be confronted by the spirits of those who had suffered in the flesh through my mistaken efforts on their behalf.

No, it is inconceivable to think of the "Help" people standing in the way of bare justice to the human wreckage of the world war. They will never do it in cold blood, but I dread more than a little that the well-meaning folk who advertised the maimed of the Boer War in a desperate effort to raise funds, will drift amiably on in their "own way" until the crash comes, thus playing straight into the hands of the Treasury "economists," and hampering beyond measure those who desire to see the disabled ex-soldier removed from the stigma of charity. The plain fact is, that the "Help Society" has gone far beyond its legitimate sphere. It is a charitable society, and is in all respects admirable so long as it confines its

efforts to helping ex-Service men who through old age, sickness, or misfortune are in need of assistance. That is quite as it should be—the trouble begins when the hat is passed round to finance general employment work, and the technical training of the disabled. That is wrong in principle, unscientific, mistaken, and doomed to eventual failure after slurring over the real needs and rights of the men, thus inflicting a double injury, direct and indirect, and all in the sacred name of charity! There may be serious trouble if this continues—the Barmecide feast ended with a nasty shock for him who gave it.

The French have shown us not only what we ought to do in future, but what we should have done months before I began to write this book. This is their plan, as described in one of our daily papers: "Saint Maurice Hospital, in Paris, is a convalescent home for working people, founded and endorsed by Napoleon III., conducted by the 'Assistance Publique.' Before the war it sheltered 12,000 inmates. Its magnificent buildings stand in fine grounds, practically part of the Bois de Vincennes. This splendid home has been given over to soldiers mutilated in the war who cannot possibly return to active service. A hospital is, in the eyes of the military authorities, not so much a place to cure wounds as to

restore men to the front, says the *Chicago Herald*.

“But all who enter Saint Maurice are lost to the Army, and are there to be fitted, as well as possible, for their future life as civilians. The blind come to learn massage, finding plenty of subjects to practise on among their fellow-inmates.

“There are fifteen machines in the mechanotherapeutic department to remove ankylosis, or stiffness from any joint. Thumbs, wrists, ankles, etc., all can be exercised by an ingenious apparatus, in which the weight moved can be graduated from almost nothing to what normal strength should work.

“A series of footprints, painted at varying distances along a wooden walk, recalled Robinson Crusoe’s alarmed surprise at the footstep he found on the sands. These are to enable men to practise walking again. One poor fellow, paralysed, gave up after an attempt to place his feet in three or four marks successively. A ladder fastened to the ground was used for a similar purpose, only that stepping from space to space made men lift their feet a little to pass over the wooden rungs. After practising with the ladder, men use another in which boards of various heights replace the rungs.

“About five hundred and fifty men are

treated daily in this department. A bright young fellow, whose legs were paralysed, was struggling to walk with the help of wooden poles loosely fastened along his legs. He showed us with pride how he could bend his knees (it was so slight a bend to be proud of it!).

“For three months he has been working to get well, and, said the doctor, ‘He will cure himself, because he has the will to do so.’ He has already applied to be taken as an aviation pupil after his recovery. We left him shuffling along, and tried to realise what three months of such efforts could mean.

“The X-ray department, where sixteen or seventeen radiographs are taken daily, is under the direction of a young Army surgeon, whose arm was shot away early in the war. He wore the Military Medal.

“Four long wooden sheds in which artificial arms and legs are to be manufactured are in process of completion. The demand for such articles has far exceeded the supply, and trained workmen are so scarce that they can demand very high wages, thus making their products very dear.

“Those that are to be made at Saint Maurice are to be of the simplest character. ‘Highly ingenious artificial arms and legs are all very well for the rich,’ the doctor said, ‘but the

working man needs something that will not get out of order or need days to repair.'

"In the grounds is a separate building where, before the war, workmen who were incapable of continuing their work were taught some trade which they could still practise. This building is now occupied by a hundred and thirty-five mutilated soldiers learning such things as tailoring, leather-working, bootmaking, etc.

"Many of these men were farm labourers, but all seem to take to a new line with great readiness. Some are taught to become directors of work which they themselves cannot perform. A designer who had lost his right arm at Les Eparges on 5th May was busy with a complicated plan he had drafted with his left hand after only a month's practice."

That is the French record. The Huns, as far as anything can be seen through the steel curtain of stringent censorship which shuts Germany off from the rest of the world, are doing a surprising amount of work for their maimed men. I state this on the authority of an illustration published in a London daily, and inscribed, "HOW THE GERMANS LOOK AFTER THEIR WOUNDED.—A remarkable photograph (reproduced from a German newspaper), which goes a long way

to illustrate German thoroughness. Over two hundred men—many of them, it will be noted, have lost an arm—are seen seated in one of the royal palaces in Berlin learning typewriting under the tuition of women experts. The idea is, of course, to fit them for civil life after the war.”

In this country, before the war was three months old, I went to the War Office and suggested that something really ought to be done to make official preparation to cope with the training and civil employment of the disabled, but I soon learned that nothing was likely to happen until the official mind had dealt with the reports of Sir Edward Ward's and other committees, and that in any case every responsible officer and official was far too overwhelmed with work directly connected with the actual fighting to give much time or attention to the subject. The Whitehall idea seemed to be that after the war was over would be quite time enough to take the matter up. Nothing was done. Sir George Murray's Committee came next. I have already dealt with its report and the formation of the Statutory Committee, but the first result I heard about was that the Friends of the Poor, a most admirable society in its merciful sphere, resolved to visit men in hospital and help or advise them concern-

ing their prospects on returning to civil life. Then came the news that the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society was moving heaven and earth to collect funds in the name of dear old "Bobs," and I dare say that one way and the other quite a fair number of disabled men have been helped. I am sure that all of them fit for work have found employment; in fact, the National Association people told me they had a waiting list of employers anxious to give disabled men a new start in life. This is all very pretty, it makes grand reading when shown right side up in an official report, but it does not bear analysis when looked at in a common-sense way. The unfortunate part of the business is that men who lose their earning capacity will have to be fed for the rest of their lives, and that as soon as the hot flush of passing eagerness to employ such men anywhere and anyhow has passed, and the labour market becomes congested by the return of millions of sound men, the disabled will be looked at for just what they may be worth in comparison with others, and the question of their employment often prejudiced by the remark, "Well, they have pensions, you know."

Other very important points must not be passed over. For the time being, the "Help Society" could rely upon a measure of financial

support which is sure to dwindle terribly since the Statutory Committee has come into being. Next, we have to remember that as income from charity diminishes, calls upon it are sure to increase. As I have already explained, very large numbers of men have been retained in the ranks as "usable" in a military sense in some capacity or other, although through wounds or sickness they will be handicapped for the rest of their lives. These men will provide grave problems as time goes on, and to them must be added further large numbers who have been temporarily pensioned at a rate which enables them to carry on for the time being without any particular need for employment, but who will wake up with a shock when the Pension Commissioners have settled the amount of their permanent pensions. Even a Pensions Appeal Board will not be able to pension these people for life on a scale rendering them independent for the remainder of their days, except, of course, in cases of indisputable total disablement. Altogether, the prospect is far too menacing and pregnant with trouble to allow things to drift.

We have to settle the right lines on which to work, and start at once. In this connection I do not think it would be wise to extend permanent workshops with their heavy

establishment charges any more than could be helped. The main idea is to get the disabled in normal work, or something as near it as they can perform, with a minimum of cost and delay. Few, if any, should be permanently retained in central workshops. If some poor fellows are so nearly finished that they can only do light work of special kinds under conditions which no ordinary employer could hope to meet, then it would be better to allow them to work in their own homes. Raw material, very possibly "roughed out" by labour-saving machinery, could be supplied to these men, and in their own homes they should be able to earn as much towards supplementing their pensions as can reasonably be expected. The marketing of their work presents a problem of considerable difficulty. In time of war, of course, people will flock to fashionable bazaars and buy things made by the wounded, paying prices otherwise unobtainable. This kind of thing will continue until the war warmth is cold, and then the majority of people will buy in the cheapest market. This is not cynicism, it's the truth—and the thing to do is to face it by arranging to market, through the usual business channels, articles made by the disabled; and if this cannot be done if the men are to be paid a fair price for their work, then pay

the men properly and write off the loss, always endeavouring, as a general rule, to keep this section of activity at zero.

The true ideal is to bring disabled men to such a pitch of usefulness that an ordinary employer can find them work, and the quicker it is done the better. This will often mean a complete change of occupation—it will, I fear, often transform productive workers into non-producers; but it is the best and most economical process in the end. Disabled men of a certain stamp should be brought as quickly as possible to such a condition that they can take work at full wages as messengers, caretakers, night-watchmen, and the like; and the time and cost of elaborate technical instruction reserved exclusively for cases where the benefit to the individual is obvious and undeniable. It is no use trying to teach a man a trade when his physical condition is such that he can never hope to do more than make a sorry show at it (unless he belongs to the small section whose work is to be disposed of by the society). In all other cases it would be decidedly preferable to pension the man permanently and liberally according to the extent of his disability, make him as sound as the best of medical science can patch him up, and then place him in some unskilled or semi-skilled berth where little or no technical

instruction is required before he becomes a wage-earner.

It is therefore of primary importance to do all that is possible to fit invalid or disabled men for employment after curative treatment has run its normal course. I am not competent to write half a dozen technical words on this subject, but I do know that Sir George Murray's Committee very rightly emphasised its importance; and any layman can understand that a maimed soldier is entitled to have his artificial limb or limbs supplied by the best makers working under the direction of a medical expert; and that it is absurd to leave such a matter in the hands of the Pension Commissioners. It is also obvious that in many cases, especially those of a nervous kind, home treatment extended over a fairly long period would be of distinct value; or, maybe, special outpatient hospital treatment at regular intervals would be just what a man required to bring him as nearly to his old self again as he could ever hope to be. Such propositions amount to platitudes, but although I have consulted a medical friend on the point, I make my next suggestion with all the diffidence of a man venturing out of his depth into technicalities he knows nothing about. The suggestion I have to put forward is, that it would

be desirable, in the vast majority of cases, to combine medical effort with such technical instruction as the men might be fit to receive with advantage. I am certain that this would tend to improve the morale of the men, it would hearten them, make them think that they were not so hard hit after all, and induce that cheerful frame of mind which, so my doctor friend informs me, has a distinct medical value. It would also appear highly advantageous if the specialist knew what work a man intended to take up, as, again on the authority of my medical friend, I believe that such knowledge would be useful in deciding the particular type of artificial limb most suitable for everyday working use.

Another point to be noted is, that it is not clever to herd our disabled in big centres. We want to spread them all over the country as widely as possible, and, whenever it can be done, their training should be distributed in the same manner. Suppose, for example, that a man is a bad "leg case," a permanent cripple, but that his arms are sound, and he has a liking for shoemaking, saddlery, or some other work which can be done while sitting. Very well, why not send that man to a shoemaker or saddler in his own part of the country, and pay the worthy tradesman

a premium to instruct the disabled soldier, on the understanding that if the man turned out well, he would do his best to give him employment? No doubt, the man, if married, might have to receive a small weekly grant to supplement his pension until he became skilful enough to earn a stipulated wage. This grant would have to be managed with care and discretion, and reserved, as a rule, for exceptional cases; but when it was added to the premium, I am sure it would work out at a good deal less than the cost of training the man in a central institution; and there is the added consideration that men trained locally in this manner would have an excellent opportunity of finding work on the spot. Again, such a scheme would tend to produce and foster a species of commendable local pride, inasmuch as the townspeople would feel that they were "doing their bit" for their own wounded, and far better and more lasting results could be anticipated than would be obtainable from a slavish adherence to technical instruction for each and every man in a big workshop in London or some other large centre. I propounded this idea at considerable length to Sir George Murray's Committee, and notice that it came in for favourable mention in the report.

It may be asked that if the "Help Society"

is not to touch ordinary employment, then what is it to do? The answer is that the "Help Society" can undertake much useful work which cannot be touched by the new body we have in mind. That body must have a rigid rule that under no circumstances will money be given or advanced to men—the National Association has always been very sound on this point. We cannot mix employment with charity, but it is nevertheless difficult at times to say quite where one begins and the other leaves off. Suppose, for example, that a man is offered work at a distance but is unable to pay fares and moving expenses, or that he requires a kit of tools he cannot provide. The "Help" people should be charged with attending to such cases, by lending the money as a rule, and it might also recommend to the proper authority special cases where unusual expenditure appears advisable. In addition, of course, it could carry on with its usual good work on behalf of men in sad positions similar to those I have already quoted, and should make a strong point of helping the non-pensionable ex-soldier in distress. This work is essentially charitable, and the requisite cash could be obtained in the usual manner, continuously supplemented by regular subscriptions from Service units and private individuals. In fact, I should regard it as

extremely probable that for this object alone the "Help Society" would receive almost as much support as it will in any case, and I am sure that such support will be well handled and transferred promptly to those who want it.

CHAPTER XIV

“THE NATIONAL” AND THE “OLDEST ESTABLISHED SOCIETY”

THE National Association for the Employment of Reserve and Discharged Soldiers (now known as the National Association for the Employment of Ex-Soldiers) was established in 1885, and so far as numbers go, has found employment for more ex-soldiers than every other agency put together. It is, to the extent of a thousand a year, a subsidised branch of War Office effort, and without for a moment hinting that Whitehall has ever interfered with the working of the Association, yet as this subsidy constituted rather more than half of the total income of the head office for the year ending 31st March 1910, it is easy to see just how far the War Office may be written down as a powerful but sleeping partner in the concern.

Upon the whole, taking its means and methods into account, the National has done very well indeed, but, *per contra*, by reason of

its insufficient means and inefficient methods, it has to take the lion's share of responsibility for those ex-soldiers who figure in that Poor Law Report. No doubt this is partly because the Association would never enter a man on its books who was not in sound physical condition, or whose official character was less than "Good" under the recently discredited system of character assessment I referred to earlier in my book.

Lack of means, however, was the main trouble. Something under two thousand a year, nearly half of it subscribed by regiments and other supporters, was never more than a bad joke when considered as the annual income of the head office of a society charged with finding employment for the major portion of the from twenty-five to thirty thousand men whom the Army returns to civil life in each normal year. It can't be done at the price, or anything like it, and therefore we find the National unable to keep a man to ring up all the Labour Exchanges in London every morning to see what there might be going suitable for ex-soldiers, unable to advertise at all largely, unable to circularise employers on a system of "follow-up" letters, which alone might be expected to be worth attempting, unable to canvass employers except to a most limited extent, unable to do anything worth

mentioning to help serving soldiers to prepare for their return to civil life, unable, in fact, to accomplish anything really well except keep a set of books in perfect order. The officials cannot be blamed for this—they did their best with the cash they had to spend, and also, incidentally, with a system they inherited.

This system may have been fairly up to date in the middle eighties, although I doubt it, but there can be no question that in recent years it has failed to fill the bill. There is too strong a dash of the “orderly room” about the methods of procedure. A man marches himself in front of an ex-officer, sees his name entered in a book, and then reports himself every morning at a stated hour to see whether he can get a fresh start in life. This is not the right way to do it. It makes the men think they are still in the Service, and that in due course a job will be served up to them in a ration dish whether they try for it or not, and in this respect I have never been able to agree with the working methods of the National Association. However, this is merely a matter of internal working which could be changed in a very short time; the main difficulty—the question of cash—brings us chock-a-block against the ex-soldier question as a whole, and for this the Government is clearly responsible. Apparently the official

mind has never reasoned like this—If it takes a thousand a year to spoil a job, how much would be required to do it properly? The answer to this question brings us very near indeed to the crux of the whole subject, and I shall not forget to submit an estimate in its due order.

The next society, which need not detain us very long, is the Army and Navy Pensioners' and Time-Expired Men's Employment Society, which was established in 1855, and reconstituted in 1859. This Society has enjoyed in its time a certain amount of financial support *via* the War Office, usually a hundred a year, plus a tenner or so from the Tournament funds if the show had a good year; and I see that the Admiralty has weighed in with a trifle every now and then. It has branches in Dublin and Glasgow, and is, on its own showing, "This useful and oldest established Society." In effect, however, it is a limited edition of the National, covering much the same ground, except as regards reservists, and jogging steadily on with a secretary and a solitary clerk in its head office, something like a stage coach trying to do the work of an express train. It is hopelessly behind the times, miserably financed, and has really been obsolete and superfluous for the last quarter of a century at least. It has survived, I sup-

pose, mainly because we do like to hang on to old things in this country; and although I admit it has done what it could with its miniature staff and funds, and hasten to credit its officials with a most zealous discharge of their duties, yet it makes me smile to think that such a quaint survival should have found conditions favourable to its continued existence as a separate body right up to now.

This completes the trio of societies whose separate working has puzzled even themselves, and caused the following recommendation to appear in the report of Sir Edward Ward's 1905-6 Committee. After the paragraph I quoted at the head of Chapter XI., the report continues:

"The brief particulars which we have already given of the various agencies which at present exist for the purpose of helping ex-soldiers and ex-sailors to obtain employment will of themselves serve to indicate that under existing arrangements there must of necessity be considerable overlapping in their work, and that there is, as a consequence, a loss of energy as well as a waste of expenditure in the continuance of separate institutions with independent offices and staffs which might be prevented if it were possible to bring all under one distinct organisation.

"In the course of our inquiry, the fact

that such overlapping of work exists has been brought to our notice by representatives of the National Association, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Help Society, the Army and Navy Pensioners' Employment Society, and the Royal Engineer Labour Bureau.

"The consequence of the overlapping is obvious, as, in addition to the disadvantages above referred to, it enables a man to 'ring the changes' on the various societies, for in the existing circumstances there is no sufficient means of securing that the different agencies are advised of his conduct. A man by bad conduct, by unsteadiness, or by relinquishing his employment capriciously and without sufficient reason, injures the chances of eligible men by prejudicing employers against the engagement of ex-soldiers and sailors."

Quite so; individually, the societies referred to above have always been open to grave criticism for the reasons I have dealt with, and collectively, on the showing of a responsible official committee, their aggregate efforts have a distinct tendency towards "prejudicing employers against the engagement of ex-soldiers and sailors"; and on the showing of the Poor Law Report their joint failure has played a leading part in furnishing "the largest contingent of the floating population of the casual wards." The plain fact is, that

these societies, jointly and severally, have failed lamentably to deal with the ex-soldier problem during the past, and as further proof of the measure of their failure I will quote the following testimony of an independent observer, Colonel Henry Pilkington, C.B., who says: "Medium service is a necessity with us, but it is extremely hard on the soldier. The years when he would, if not a soldier, be establishing himself in some permanent occupation are taken from him and occupied in learning nothing which will be useful to him in civil life. On discharge he is handicapped. He has to enter into competition with men younger than himself, who have had some years' start. In an overcrowded market old soldiers find it hard to place themselves, and we know what, in fact, happens. Perhaps I ought to say we do *not* know. Everyone knows that a great many soldiers fail, after leaving the Army, ever to establish themselves satisfactorily. But no one knows exactly how many there are who never know prosperity after the day of their discharge.

"To put it bluntly, the Army turns loose every year thousands of failures."

I agree with every word of the above, and have been at considerable pains to make clear the exact "reason why" of it in all its twists and complexities. And after what I have

written, will it be believed that, some three years ago, in a London post office, I was given a copy of the *Advantages of the Army*, in which the following words occur ?

Under “WORK ON DISCHARGE,” we are told :
 “The old soldier is not left to fight for himself. In accordance with one of the chief principles of warfare in which he has been trained, support is at hand when he is getting worsted.”

How’s that for “amazing effrontery” ?

A true bill, so true that the War Office has since pleaded guilty to it, and in the latest editions of the *Advantages of the Army* all the glowing references to civil employment have been toned down, and the publication revised in a truthful manner worthy of a Department of State.

CHAPTER XV

EX-SOLDIERS ON THE LAND

THE reference to a "back to the land" movement for ex-soldiers in the report of Sir George Murray's Committee brings us to yet another Government Department which has interested itself on behalf of the men. This is the Board of Agriculture, which is reported to be training fifty disabled ex-soldiers with a view to placing them on the land, under, I have been told, a small holdings scheme of some kind. There can be no question that Sir George Murray's Committee was thoroughly justified in emphasising the importance of this aspect of the ex-soldier's prospects in life, but it must not be overlooked that able-bodied men as well as the disabled have to be taken into consideration when any attempt is made to place ex-soldiers on the land. The question is both big and old, big enough to have sent the late Arnold-Forster out to South Africa with the idea of arranging for the land settlement of ex-soldiers in that country, and old

enough for the *Observer* to reprint the following from its columns of a century ago—10th September 1815: "Persons have been appointed in Canada to execute an order of the Prince Regent, that each disbanded soldier shall have 100 acres of land, and each disbanded officer 200, with provisions and articles of husbandry."

To bring the subject up to date, we may note that Sir Rider Haggard has left on a tour of the Empire devoted to similar work in future, from which it is evident that this aspect of the problem is certain to meet with due consideration.

The subject has a book of its own,—*Land Settlement for Soldiers*,—written by Colonel Henry Pilkington, C.B., a volume which must be regarded as the standard work on this phase of the ex-soldier problem, and can be honestly commended to those who wish to study the matter in detail. Personally, I think there ought to be a great future on the land for ex-soldiers both in the old country and the Colonies, but, following the precedent established by Sir George Murray's Committee, I would fain leave the formation of a plan in other hands. The land is a subject I know nothing about, but I claim to have a peculiar and extensive knowledge of the ex-soldier; and I can say at once that if it is desired to

put him on the land at home, the wages must be better and the conditions of life far more lively and attractive than those I have seen in and near some of our country villages. And I venture the opinion for what it may be worth, that the average ex-soldier is not likely to take kindly to agricultural work unless there is something fairly substantial at the end of it. Give him a stake in the country, and he should do well on the land; but, save in exceptional and isolated cases, I do not consider it probable that he will be a success as an ordinary agricultural worker with no proprietary or co-operative interest in the land he has to cultivate.

It is evident that this idea finds strong support in most influential quarters, as, since the above was written, the *Times* has published the following :

The first part of the final report of Sir Harry Verney's Committee on the settlement or employment on the land in England and Wales of discharged soldiers and sailors, was issued yesterday. It deals solely with the settlement of men in holdings of their own, tenancy rather than ownership being suggested. The question of employment for wages is left for a further report.

As stated in the forecast, the conclusions

arrived at in the present report point to an extensive scheme of State purchase of land and the provision by the State of a large grant of money. The sum of £2,000,000 is recommended, with such further sums as may be needed, for the acquisition and equipment of land for pioneer colonies, a commencement to be made at once with three, comprising 5000 acres in all. Additional land is to be acquired for further colonies later. It is estimated that the two millions will provide for four or five thousand families.

It will be remembered that an interim report issued in October recommended the training of fifty disabled soldiers and sailors at an agricultural college as a preliminary experiment, with a view to their becoming small holders. The present report recommends the provision of adequate funds for the training of disabled men.

The following is a summary of the principal recommendations of the Committee :

A.—SETTLEMENT BY THE STATE

- (a) That the Board of Agriculture should be given power to acquire land for the settlement of ex-Service men in State Colonies, and that landowners should be invited to offer to the Board any large

farms which come in hand before they are relet.

- (b) That no men should be allowed to take up holdings of their own unless they have the necessary experience. Men without such experience should be offered employment at wages in the first instance.
- (c) That any small holdings established should be on a basis of tenancy rather than ownership.
- (d) That the colonies should be laid out so that more land can be added to each holding in due course.
- (e) That the War Office should hand over to the Board, free of cost, any of the military hutments which are not required for military purposes after the war.
- (f) That expert guidance should be provided for the settlers in each colony by the appointment of a resident director and an agricultural or horticultural instructor.
- (g) That steps should be taken to encourage co-operation in all directions.
- (h) That a depot should be established in each colony for the collection and disposal of produce, and a store for the sale of requirements.
- (i) That part of each colony should be retained as a central farm, from which horses,

implements, etc., can be let out on hire to the settlers.

- (j) That a co-operative credit society should be established in connection with each colony, and that the State should take up share capital in such societies to the extent of 5s. for each acre.
- (k) That all possible social amenities should be provided in the colonies, and that women's institutes or clubs should be established for the settlers' wives.
- (l) That the rents of the small holdings should be sufficient to recoup the capital outlay and the cost of management, except the salaries of the resident staff and the cost of preliminary training, but no sinking fund for the repayment of the purchase price of the land should be charged.
- (m) That immediate steps should be taken by the Board to acquire and equip land for three pioneer colonies, comprising 5000 acres in all, and that additional land should be acquired for the establishment of further colonies.
- (n) That in the first instance a sum of £2,000,000 should be placed at the disposal of the Board for the purposes of land settlement, and that such further sums as may be needed should be provided.

B.—SETTLEMENT BY COUNTY COUNCILS

- (a) That county councils should undertake the provision of small holdings for ex-Service men who are not prepared to go to the State Colonies.
- (b) That as far as possible councils should establish colonies of small holdings similar to the State Colonies.
- (c) That the Public Works Loan Commissioners should be authorised to resume the issue of loans to councils for the purchase and adaptation of lands for small holdings.
- (d) That the Small Holdings Act should be amended so that the Board of Agriculture may become partners with the county councils in the whole business of providing small holdings under the Act, and may pay half of any losses that may be incurred.
- (e) That certain other amendments should be made in the Act.

C.—THE CASE OF DISABLED MEN

- (a) That adequate funds should be provided by the State for the training of any disabled men who desire to settle on the land.

- (b) That such training should be given by the Board of Agriculture acting on behalf of the Statutory Committee under the Naval and Military War Pensions Act.
- (c) That, after being trained, disabled men should be treated on the same footing as able-bodied men, except that in selecting the tenants of small holdings they might be given the preference if other things are equal.

D.—PROPAGANDA FOR LAND SETTLEMENT

- (a) That a propagandist campaign in favour of land settlement at home should be undertaken by the Board of Agriculture with the assistance and co-operation of the Admiralty and War Office prior to the demobilisation of the Navy and Army.

DRAWBACKS OF OWNERSHIP

WHY TENANCY IS PREFERABLE

The Committee, after giving special consideration to the question, came to the definite conclusion that for the purpose in view, tenancy was preferable to ownership from the point of view of the State and from that of the small holder.

From the point of view of the State, their principal objection to ownership is that under that system it is impossible to exercise any effective supervision as to the manner in which the occupying owner cultivates his land, nor can there be any real control of the character or upkeep of the buildings; whereas under a system of tenancy, notice to quit can be given to a tenant who neglects his holding. The importance of preserving as well as creating holdings is emphasised, and it is pointed out that a small freeholder is liable to be tempted to sell his holding if he can obtain a price which will give him an income in excess of what he obtains from the cultivation of the land, and that this has been the reason in the past why so many small holdings have disappeared.

AN AGRICULTURAL LADDER

From the point of view of the small holder, tenancy rather than ownership is recommended on the ground that what is aimed at is an agricultural ladder, by which a man may rise, through the intermediate stage of a small holding, until he becomes the tenant of a large farm. Occupying ownership is described as a real impediment to a man who wishes to rise, as he may not be able to move without sacrific-

ing a portion of the capital he has sunk in his holding.

Another disadvantage of ownership would be that the small holder would have to sink part of his capital in the purchase of the land, instead of for stocking and working his holding. Capital employed in the working of land returns a much higher rate of interest than capital employed in its purchase. Purchase by annual instalments, as under the Irish Land Acts, is brushed aside on the ground that in Ireland the amount advanced by the State to a tenant represents only the value of the landlord's interest, which is seldom more than three-quarters, and sometimes not more than half, the value of the land, while in this country the value of the landlord's interest is practically identical with the value of the land. The State would be bound to require a cash deposit of a certain proportion of the purchase price to avoid risk of loss.

RESTRICTIONS OF STATE-AIDED PURCHASE

The real choice is not between tenancy and absolute ownership, but between tenancy and a strictly limited and restricted form of ownership. Under any system of State-aided purchase there must, during the currency of the loan, be restrictions on the liberty of the

owner to mortgage his land, to sublet it, or to use it for other than agricultural purposes, and few occupying owners created by a system of State-aided purchase can hope to be in the position or to have the privileges of an ordinary landowner during their own lifetime. The most they can hope is that at the end of a period extending over some forty years or longer, during which their annual payments are indistinguishable from rent, their sons, or more probably some complete stranger, may enter into the full fruits of ownership. We hear much of the magic of ownership, but we cannot believe that this kind of deferred and restricted ownership offers any greater incentive to industry and enterprise than security of tenure at a fair rent.

Experience under the Small Holdings Act is quoted as greatly strengthening the arguments against a system of ownership. If land is bought by the State for the settlement of ex-Service men the Committee do not think it should be necessary to provide in the rents for the recoupment of the capital value of the land purchased, if they represent a fair return by way of interest and provide a sufficient margin for the cost of management and the possibility of bad debts and contingencies. The purchase of the land should be regarded as an investment, for which no sinking fund is necessary.

THE IDEAL COLONY

EXPERIMENTS WITH SMALL DAIRY FARMS

The colony system, which the Committee regard as essential, has not been adopted to any material extent by county councils under the Small Holdings Act because of the unwillingness of applicants to sever local ties. For a State scheme on the scale suggested it is, however, necessary, if expert guidance, business organisation, and the social life to which the men have become accustomed are to be provided. The Committee consider that the ideal settlement would be a village community of at least one hundred families all interested in the cultivation and development of the land, but including those engaged in trades subsidiary to agriculture. In some cases the settlement may be established in close proximity to an existing village, and then the whole hundred need not be ex-Service men. In other cases it may be necessary to form a new community, and such a settlement should be designed to accommodate not less than one hundred families. The minimum acreage to be taken for a fruit and market garden settlement should be 1000 acres, and for settlement on dairying or mixed holdings 2000 acres.

These minima are selected because of the

difficulty of getting more, but whenever enough suitable land is available in the immediate neighbourhood it will be better economy for the State to take a larger acreage. Larger areas will reduce the cost of management, and will be an advantage from the point of view of collective marketing.

The type of holding recommended for men with no previous experience of agriculture is that devoted to fruit and market garden crops. On these they can be trained more quickly and easily than in any other form of cultivation, while the initial planting could be undertaken by the State and the cost included in the rent, so that the man would not have to have much capital for stocking the holding. If a holding of three acres is cultivated intensively it is as much as one man can manage without employing hired labour.

The Committee would also like to see an increase in the number of small grass holdings, which in many parts of the country are the most successful type of small holding. They suggest that some of the land at one of the first colonies should be used for a demonstration of arable dairying on holdings of 25 acres. Small mixed farms of from 35 to 50 acres, comprising both arable and grass land, with, in addition to the ordinary farm crops, a portion devoted to keeping a cow or two, pigs and poultry, and

the growth of some fruit and vegetables, while regarded as worth encouraging, are not recommended to men without knowledge and experience.

MANAGEMENT AND CO-OPERATION

It is recommended that each colony shall be under the control of a resident director possessing both scientific knowledge and practical experience, and that there shall be a practical agricultural or horticultural instructor and occasional instruction in special branches. In each colony there should be a demonstration holding managed by the director. Co-operation in the disposal of produce is recommended, though this should not be compulsory. Facilities for the small holders to obtain the use of the larger farm implements are suggested, and also for the hire of horses and extra labour at special seasons, and for this purpose it is recommended that a certain portion of the colony should be kept in hand as a central farm under the management of the director. The Committee suggest that the War Office should hand over to the Board at the conclusion of the war some of the horses and wagons no longer required for military purposes. The central farm might also find employment at certain seasons for small holders not fully employed on their own holdings.

FINANCE

It is estimated that the cost of the three pioneer colonies will not be more than £334,020. If the land could be leased and military hutments were available, it is estimated that the cost of the three colonies would be less than £100,000. The three colonies would not be likely to provide accommodation for more than three hundred families, and provision should be made on a much larger scale.

“We think,” the Committee say, “that the sum which should be appropriated for the purpose in the first instance should be £2,000,000, and that this amount should be charged on the Consolidated Fund, and should be advanced from time to time in such instalments as may be required by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries. This sum should be sufficient to provide for at least four or five thousand families, including a proportion of unmarried men; but if the number of suitable applicants fell short of these figures, the expenditure of the whole amount would be unnecessary. If, on the other hand, the above figures are exceeded, such additional sums as may be required should be provided.”

Emphasis is laid on the need for immediate preparatory steps if the colonies are to be equipped properly by the end of the war.

From the foregoing it is easy to see that this committee is under no delusions regarding the liability of the State towards the ex-soldier, but it seems to me that the scheme goes so far towards nationalisation of the land that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to devise legislation limiting it to those who have served. I have nothing to say either for or against such a state of affairs, but it is worth while pointing out that this contingency so enlarges the potentialities of the scheme that increased difficulties are sure to be met with in bringing it into being ; a matter of importance, because whatever is done for the ex-soldier will have to be done as quickly as can be, having due regard to effective working.

If I may make a suggestion on a point which may have escaped attention, I should like to propose that before a man was put on the land in a permanent sense, it would be advisable to arrange for a probationary period ; short, but of sufficient duration and scope to weed out those who had not in them what I should call "the knack of the land." These men could then be passed back and registered for other employment ; which appeals to me as decidedly better than striving to make agriculturists of unsuitable human material. It is a great mistake to think that anybody can be sent "back to the land" because the

work does not call for qualities which make for success in other spheres of life. This is an error of the first magnitude—I have proved it, tumbled right into it, and this was how I managed it.

In a weak moment, perhaps because William Cobbett was an ex-soldier who combined writing and farming with marked success in his day and generation, I took on a farmlet, shall we say, of about eight or ten acres, and soon discovered that my main occupation in life was signing cheques. It seemed to me that my share of old Adam did not throw back true to type to that gardener who fathered the human race. My poultry contracted every ill that chicken flesh is heir to, and, I am convinced, evolved sundry fresh complaints of their own never seen before in anything wearing feathers. They laid eggs, sometimes, but ate them always if there were any about ; and, as if on purpose to annoy an old gunner, they specialised in turning out eggs without shells. I slew those reported to me as the worst offenders, and after thinning these undesirables with a hot and angry hand, we had chicken at table in every shape and form the good wife could devise, but the egg supply went clean off the map. I had hoped for better things. I expected that my salutary examples “for to encourage the others”

would have improved the crop of hen-fruit out of all recognition. But it didn't, so I consulted a local expert, who looked wise and told me that the birds I had spared were cockerels!

In other directions, too, my farm proved a stumer. The land was there right enough, but the human element could not connect up with success. I soon became convinced that my farming was as far behind Cobbett's as my prose undoubtedly is, and I was never more pleased in my life than when the time came for me to shake the clods of that farm from my feet. Therefore, I have a fellow-feeling for others who may be constitutionally unfit for the amenities of rural life, but nevertheless as keen on it as terriers until experience proves their uselessness, and that is why, subject to the approval of the experts, I venture to suggest that a probationary period would be no bad thing. After what I have just written, it would be astounding cheek on my part to attempt to outline any scheme devised to place ex-soldiers on the land. I can only suggest that the report of the committee I have quoted, and the advice of gentlemen like Colonel Pilkington, the Hon. Rupert Guinness, and the editor of *The Smallholder* could be trusted to put the Land Department on a satisfactory basis, always provided

the requisite funds were forthcoming from the State ; and here I must leave a subject I know to be of such importance that I much regret my inability to deal with it in a more satisfactory manner.

CHAPTER XVI

WHERE THE NORMAL EX-SOLDIER PROBLEM BEGINS

WE have now dealt with every direct agency through which the ex-soldier problem has been brought to its present condition; there remain only the indirect factors in the case, but they are of very great importance, touching, in fact, the inception of the major portion of the whole difficulty. If traced to its source, to its protoplasmic base, the ex-soldier problem is largely attributable to the fact that proper care is not taken to prepare the serving soldier for that return to civil life he cannot hope to avert.

For years and years nothing whatever was done. All sorts and conditions of societies strove to find work for the ex-soldier, but not one of them made the least attempt to fit the serving soldier for what lay before him. In other words, these societies never made the smallest attempt to improve the quality of the raw material they were dumping on the

labour market with varying success, and in this respect the record of all of them is equally blameable. It is no excuse to say they had not the money. I know they had not, but with the influence behind them they could have obtained it if they had put up a real fight for it. But all these societies took the narrow and short-sighted view that their work did not begin until the man had left the ranks, and it was with the utmost difficulty that I managed to induce the National Association to relent far enough to consider the names of men who were still with the Colours, and I am quite certain the thing would never have been done at all but for the advocacy of a very distinguished general officer, who honoured me with an interview on the matter, and upheld the reform at the right time and place to put it into effect.

Edgar Wallace, himself an ex-soldier and one of the very few men who really understand the soldier, past or present, put the whole matter very plainly and truthfully in his evidence before Sir Edward Waid's Committee, which he gave on the 18th January 1906. His evidence is just as useful now as ever it was; for I must point out that the problem now before us is divided into two great parts: first, the abnormal ex-soldier problem created by the world war, and

secondly, the chronic ex-soldier problem of the familiar type, which, as I have already proved, threatens to be with us again at no distant date, and will assuredly persist until the question is taken thoroughly in hand.

Therefore, do not fall into the error of assuming that the words of Edgar Wallace are out of date. They are not; they deal in convincing fashion with the dawn of that world of trouble into which the ex-soldier so often falls, and will, unless a radical improvement is effected, be just as true regarding hundreds of thousands of men who have yet to enlist in normal times as they were in relation to the actual men he spoke about.

He said: "I was serving in the Army for six years as a private soldier, so that I am acquainted with most of the aspects of the question. I think the main difficulty will be to make the soldier desire some betterment in his condition. I suggest that an arrangement should be come to with the technical institutes in the various cities where soldiers are quartered, whereby the men may receive tuition in various trades and crafts. But in order to prepare the ground for this, I think it would be necessary by means of pamphlets, or through the medium of lectures, to interest the soldier in the conditions obtaining in civil life. . . . If in his spare time the soldier can

be induced to rough out a plan of employment in any given direction, the way would be ever so much smoother for him on his return to civil life. . . . The great difficulty, as I have said before, is to persuade the soldier that the conditions which drove him into the Army have not changed during his term of service. Freed from the stress of competition, he is inclined to take a rosy view of the conditions of civil life."

True, every word of it, of generations of soldiers past, and equally true, unless the conditions are changed, of generations of Regular soldiers whom we must enlist in future to protect our world Empire. But the immediate point I wish to make clear is, that right up to the beginning of the world war, the separate existence of the National Association, the "Help Society," and that "useful and oldest established Society," exerted an influence which was all for the bad on the serving soldier. It worked out like this. A soldier, who, more likely than not, joined as a mere lad, served for years in a military world where his meals, clothes, pay, and so forth were served out to him as per regulation, where "short time" was never heard of, and it was impossible for him to get "the sack" unless he took with it a stiff dose of imprisonment on discharge for misconduct of a serious and disgraceful

nature. Living in such a world, year in and year out, often far from home on foreign service and utterly out of touch with the civil labour market, such a man, if he ever gave a passing thought to his future when time-expired or transferred to the reserve, looked at the matter with all the confidence of a British soldier who feels fit and willing to go anywhere and do anything, and strengthened his confidence by remembering that at least three powerful societies existed to find work for him. So, very naturally, the soldier was deliberately induced to regard his return to civil life as something he need not bother his head about, as something his betters were working in London offices to fix up for him; and he often failed to ascertain the truth until he picked it up in the gutter or casual ward.

Realising this, and backed by a strong recommendation in the report of Sir Edward Ward's Committee, I tried hard to induce the authorities to start a *Soldiers' Employment Gazette*, to tell the truth to serving soldiers and open their eyes regarding their futures. But although my cause met with most hearty support from every officer who knew about it, yet it was always a case of "No funds available" when it came to financing such an idea. At last, so greatly did I feel that something really ought to be done in this absolutely

barren field, I took a plunge, financed the first number out of my own pocket, asked every unit in the Service to take copies at a subscription rate, and am happy to say that the *Gazette* ran as a sixteen-page monthly right up to the commencement of the war without ever asking for either charity or a grant from public funds.

Technical instruction for the serving soldier now demands attention, and I may say at once that in a book of this size and character, intended for the general reader as well as those who are more particularly interested in the ex-soldier, it is quite out of the question to give more than the barest mention to a subject which, in its relation to the serving soldier alone, demands not a book but a whole library of its own. Therefore, I will content myself by remarking that the subject has been shockingly muddled by the authorities, starved by penurious "grants," and reduced to such a condition of abject impotence that it was virtually of no account when the war broke out. Yet it is easily the most important preventive means we have of dealing with the ex-soldier problem, and here I will leave it until the time comes to deal with it again as part of a new order of things.

At this stage I showed my manuscript to a valued Service friend, and asked him what

he thought about it. He said, "In a general way, it's like this, old chap. You've been registering a target for years, and now you've soused it properly with H.E. That's all right, good shooting, but after your artillery preparation, what next? It's all very well to make a nasty mess of things as they are, but what about things as they ought to be? What about organising your advance over the ground you have pounded with some of Lloyd George's very best, and consolidating the ground won? You can't cry a halt here, young fellow, so carry on, and if you build up about half as well as you have knocked down, you ought, in your lifetime, to have a wooden statue twenty cubits high stuck full of golden nails. Get thee hence, and continue the motion until the book is complete."

CHAPTER XVII

THE EX-NAVY MAN

My old comrade put the matter tersely, as a good soldier should, but he missed one important point which has to be settled before any fresh plans can be dealt with. This relates to the Royal Navy, and compels us to consider whether the needs of ex-sailors and ex-soldiers shall be dealt with by one body, or whether the sailormen are to be left to a separate society. As already stated, several of the existing societies handle men from both Services, and it will be noted that Sir Edward Ward's Committee, Sir George Murray's Committee, and both the Treasury Committees dealt with ex-sailors and ex-soldiers as one class.

In any event, the right in equity is the same in each instance. But the needs of the men differ greatly in effect, the main point of difference being that the ex-sailor is so much more employable than the ex-soldier. As Sir Edward Ward's Committee stated :

“ At an early stage in our inquiry it was

brought home to us that the ex-sailor has not so much difficulty as the ex-soldier in obtaining employment, the nature of his work in the Navy being such as to give him a distinct marketable value as a 'handy man'; whilst the smaller establishment of the naval force and the system of long-service engagements reduce the numbers returning annually to civil life to such proportions as can be readily absorbed into avocations for which they are in demand.

"The introduction of the shorter term of naval engagement will undoubtedly affect the present position, as an increasing number of ex-sailors and marines will be annually thrown upon the labour market. It is a question whether they will be so well qualified for the employment which the men who have given longer service have apparently so readily obtained, although, on the other hand, they will have the advantage of being younger when transferred to civil life."

The conditions outlined in the latter paragraph will apply with even greater force to large numbers of men the Navy is sure to return to civil life when the abnormal war establishment is reduced, but against this must be set the fact that, except a considerable proportion of those who joined the Naval Divisions which were used ashore, the remainder were, almost to a man, of those "who go down to the sea in

ships," and will doubtless be snapped up by the mercantile marine as soon as normal conditions are restored. There will, however, from one class or the other, be an appreciable residue which will have to take its chance in the ordinary labour market, and there will also be a proportion of disabled who must not be forgotten for a moment. The Naval Employment Agency, a very well-managed society, did all that was necessary before the war, but it is doubtful whether it would have ever been brought into being but for the chronic muddle of the ex-soldier question, which left the naval people with no option except to start a society of their own. If, however, the needs of ex-Service men as a whole are to be met in a complete and satisfactory manner, all argument in favour of a separate organisation for the Navy becomes forced and unconvincing, savouring mostly of that professional rivalry which, although a splendid thing to stimulate commendable competition in fighting efficiency, is altogether out of place if carried into the problems of civil life. As regards the disabled, for instance, it is out of the question to suggest that ex-sailors should have workshops and staffs of their own, and ex-soldiers further workshops and staffs of their "ownest own," as the children say. It is also exceedingly difficult to find a single sound reason to justify

the overlapping sure to result if the needs of normal, able-bodied ex-sailors are left to a special society. Therefore, always assuming that the thing is taken in hand properly, it appears best to conclude that the "handy men" must not be left out, but brought into *the* one society, with the proviso that the Senior Service shall provide the personnel of whatever department may be immediately concerned with the requirements of ex-naval men sound in wind and limb; and shall be given perfect freedom to work on such lines as "a naval" knowledge of the men may deem most likely to place them in suitable employment. Since writing the above, I have learned with pleasure that my old friend, Mr. Lionel Yexley, editor of *The Fleet*, favours the idea of one really efficient society for both ex-soldiers and ex-sailors. He told me: "The less we split the interests of the men the better," a statement with which I heartily agree.

My book has now reached a turning-point. The time for constructive criticism has arrived, but before submitting any ideas of my own on this phase of the question, I feel it highly desirable to place before the general public the scheme advocated by Sir Edward Ward's Committee, which was as follows:

The Committee stated: "We have arrived at the conclusion that it is essential that one

association should be constituted to take the place of the existing separate societies, each with its independent machinery. The creation of such an association would involve the co-ordination of the various societies now existing for the purpose of finding employment for ex-soldiers and sailors, and the transfer of the work in connection with this subject now carried on by the War Office.

“In order, however, that it may receive the advantage of the wide experience and influence which these societies have gained in their patriotic labours, we recommend that the Association should be under the guidance of an advisory council, selected, in the first instance, from members of the more important employment societies associated with representatives of the War Office and Admiralty, of the Corporations of the Cities of London and Westminster, of the London County Council, and of the borough councils of the Metropolis, and selected ex-sailors and soldiers who have achieved success in civil employment after relinquishing the Service. The Association should be supported and financially assisted by, but not under the control of, the War Office and the Admiralty.

“The Association we contemplate would consist of a Central Office with its executive staff, as shown in Appendix 17, situated in

a suitable position in London, with branch offices in the counties and large towns, of which a suggested list is given in Appendix 18.

“The lord-lieutenants of counties and mayors of cities and boroughs should be invited to form Branches with Committees which should work under the general supervision of the Central Office, and should include some of the influential people of the district—employers, etc., the officer commanding the grouped regimental district, the colonel of the territorial battalions or corps, and the naval recruiting officer.

“We feel assured that if the work of the Association is conducted by officials of energy and experience, the area of employment will be largely extended. While appreciating the work which has been carried out by the many devoted workers, it appears to the Committee that it is necessary, especially in the centres of labour, to employ officials whose duty would be not only to register applicants for work, but, as several witnesses have suggested, to ‘hunt up’ employers and bring frequently to their notice by personal interviews the opportunities of obtaining labour which the organisation will afford.

“It should be their object to get into touch with employers of labour throughout the Empire, and no employment, however tem-

porary, should be considered too unimportant for registration. The branch offices should be situated in convenient parts of the towns where they will be easily accessible to all classes of employers. These offices, except in places of minor labour importance, should not be provided in barracks.

“It is clearly to be kept in view that the Association, with its Branches, will exist purely for the purpose of finding employment for men of good character, and not in any sense as a charitable institution, it not being our intention to suggest that there should be any interference with the charitable work carried on by such organisations as the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Help Society.

“PROVISION OF FUNDS

“In order to provide the means of meeting the financial needs of such an association as we have recommended, it is essential that steps should be taken to secure more adequate support from the State than has hitherto been afforded.

“As has already been shown, the Government contribution for the purpose of finding employment for the soldier is at present only £1150. This slender endowment would be quite inadequate for the requirements of the proposed Association.

“We feel that the time has come for the Government to mark its sense of the value which attaches to the question by making a substantial grant for the general work of the Association we propose, and we therefore strongly recommend that an annual contribution of £16,000 should be made, of which £12,000 should be provided from the Army Votes, and, in view of the smaller demands, £4000 from Naval Funds. This subsidy would constitute the nucleus of an income for the Association, and supplemented, as we rely upon its being as heretofore, by considerable regimental and voluntary contributions, should enable the scope of the work to be widely extended.

“If the problem of obtaining employment for the ex-soldier and sailor is to be successfully grappled with, we are convinced that a grant such as that we have proposed is an absolute necessity.”

This was published ten years ago, and it may well be asked why such an eminently reasonable and just recommendation fell as flat as a pancake. Nothing was done worth mentioning. Why?

For many reasons, the first and most weighty of which was the cash asked for. The Treasury officials would never sanction such expenditure on ex-soldiers who had “the

casual ward" to fall back on—not likely!—although they were perfectly willing to pour out untold gold to hordes of officials charged with valuing other people's land. Furthermore, the Report, with all the stately decorum of an official publication, could only handle facts and express opinions with a studied reserve, very impressive to those in the know, but quite beyond the ken of the average reader. It was out of the question to put between the blue covers of an official report facts and figures, comment and censure, praise and blame, and human episodes calculated to make the ex-soldier problem really "understood of the people." Much had to be left to be read between the lines by those who understood the subject before they looked at the Report, and that is why I have taken particular care not to leave anything between the lines in this book.

Another thing which told against the Report was its lack of directness regarding the proposed new Association. Even the Appendices lost themselves in much detail difficult to follow except by the expert, and the Report, having regard to the magnitude and gravity of the problem, must be regarded as nebulous and adumbrative to a disconcerting extent when an attempt is made to visualise the proposed Association as an organisation in

being. Consequently, the Report, although well noticed by the Press when it first appeared, soon ceased to interest the country at large. Those responsible for the compilation of the Report failed to understand how difficult it is to interest the public in an idea, in a new thing which needs strong public support to transform it from a paper project into a working organisation. The Report excites no feeling likely to create a continuity of interest in the average mind ; it is the outline of an admirable piece of machinery, granted, but too stiff and formal in its style and scope to provide the driving power which alone could carry its recommendations into effect.

Nevertheless, as I have already proved by extracts from official reports, more than one attempt was made to give effect to that portion of the Report which advocates the co-ordination of the National Association, the Employment Department of the "Help Society," and the Army and Navy Pensioners' and Time-Expired Men's Employment Society. The attempts failed to materialise, mainly, I think, because those responsible for the control of the societies mentioned were not satisfied that adequate financial provision would be forthcoming from the Treasury if they consented to amalgamation. Very naturally they were loth to lose their indi-

viduality, to relinquish their freedom of independent action, on nothing more substantial than a recommendation in a War Office Report. There was also a feeling, not very material, that it amounted to a confession of a failure to consent to co-ordination, and there may have been appreciable difficulty in agreement on working methods if ever discussion on co-ordination went so far that administrative details were on the agenda. Add to these, difficulty experienced in coping with the peculiar work and methods of the "Help Society," especially as regards training disabled men and obtaining employment for men whose Service records were none too good, and we may take it that we have a fairly complete list of the immediate obstacles to co-ordination during the past.

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEW ORDER OF THINGS

TAKING it for granted, as I think we well may, that the immediate future demands the creation of a really effective organisation to deal with the ex-soldier problem, we may at once divide the outline of such an organisation into four parts, as under :

(A) The composition and constitution of the new body.

(B) Its general scope and policy.

(C) Its working methods.

(D) Finance.

Regarding (A), the first step is to clear the ground by a formal amalgamation of all the existing societies or departments which have made such a sorry mess of the problem during the past ; excepting, of course, the Corps of Commissionaires and the various regimental associations. The arguments in favour of such amalgamation are so strong and well established, and the absolute necessity for it is so great, that any societies or indi-

viduals who persist in adopting a short-sighted independent view thereby incur a responsibility of so grave a nature that they must come out into the open and put their names to it. Then, if time proves them to be right, theirs will be the credit; but if their action leads to disaster, theirs will be the blame, and their names will be on record to show who the men were who sulked in their separate tents when a call was made for united action.

Perhaps, however, amalgamation scarcely describes the required process. What must happen in effect is the obliteration of these societies and departments as distracting or competing influences, and the inclusion of the best that is in them in an entirely new body designed to handle the ex-soldier problem in an effective manner. It will be a fatal error if these societies and departments are merely put into the melting-pot and cast into a whole which reproduces all their faults and shortcomings. Much new metal must be put into the crucible, the fire of finance must be fed much more generously to liquefy a larger mass of raw material, and the new alloy run into moulds designed to give us something better both in substance and effectiveness.

A title, I suppose, is one of the first things to decide upon when outlining the requirements of the new body, but I will not presume

to mention one. I will content myself with a loyal and respectful suggestion that the prefix "Royal" would impart a gracious touch of dignity and importance to the new body, and the remark that the official titles of the existing societies might be set out as a subtitle, commencing, "With which is amalgamated." After all, however, the title can be left to those who may be charged with shaping the destinies of the new organisation, while we proceed to deal with its composition and constitution.

I suppose we may take it as settled that the Royal and other distinguished patronage bestowed on the separate societies would pass to the new body as a matter of course, and thus provide an imposing list of patrons and vice-patrons whose names would give the new organisation a status it could not otherwise obtain. These notabilities would be *ex-officio* members of the Council, a body which would also include representatives from each department of State in any way connected with the work, representatives of municipal bodies, employers of labour, trade union leaders, social workers, experts on technical instruction and the land question, business experts selected by the leading Chambers of Commerce, an emigration expert, at least one independent financial expert, and two or three

ex-soldiers or sailors. This Council would be quite a large body vested with supreme authority, but in actual working its functions would be directed almost entirely on large questions of policy and general finance. It would, of course, pass annual reports and issue such statements as might be deemed advisable from time to time, but it would never interfere with details or have any direct connection with the everyday working of the new body. This point is important, because in the past much harm has been done through executive officials having to study the whims of influential people, who were doubtless enthusiastic and well-meaning enough, but, unfortunately, too highly placed to be told to their faces that they were advocating some personal fad or other of no real value. Consequently, much effort has been wasted in "keeping on the right side" of a Somebody, with a capital "S," instead of doing what experience had taught was really best for the men.

This very human fault must be eliminated by the creation of a chain of command and responsibility, which, without resulting in the production of "watertight compartments," will nevertheless prevent individual interference by ladies or gentlemen whose wealth or social position gives them too much influence for us

to allow them to pop about all over the place, suggesting here and insisting there, and gravely imperilling the efficiency of the whole body corporate of the new society. To prevent this, and also to ensure a constant and direct supervision of working details, an Executive Committee must be appointed. This Committee will be the sole machinery by which the Council will transform its resolutions into deeds; and, as a rule, the Council will decide its policy on recommendations brought before it by the Executive Committee, without, however, in any way prejudicing its right to initiate action itself should it think fit to do so. But it must be clearly understood that whatever the Council may decide, the effect of its resolutions, so far as they concern the interior economy and working of the society, must be conveyed through the Executive Committee to those concerned, and that the Committee must be directly responsible to the Council for results obtained. In other words, the Executive Committee will be the responsible working body, the Council the controlling and sanctioning body. But this must not be taken to mean that the Executive Committee is to be tied hand and foot and unable to move without the express consent in writing of the Council. On the contrary, a very large measure of independent initiative and re-

sponsibility must be vested in the Executive Committee. The Council will usually sit in judgment after the event ; will decide whether or not a certain line of action is to be dropped, modified, or even extended ; but it can never take up the attitude that the Executive Committee is to do nothing except in accordance with plans passed in detail beforehand by the Council. What we want in this new body is the maximum of effort—quick, decisive, and effective—and a minimum of talk ; of committee meeting answering unto committee meeting, of report after report lying pigeon-holed “ under consideration ” ; and sundry departmental wrangles on red-tape points occupying the major part of the time and ability of executive officials. This must not be ; it is far better to allow for a reasonable margin of error and failure, as any business house would, instead of trying to make theoretical perfection faultless on paper before anything is done.

It follows, however, that an Executive Committee endowed with such important and far-reaching powers must be composed of men who may be expected to rise to their responsibilities. This brings me to the vital stipulation that the dominating interest in the Executive Committee must be a business one. The Committee must not be too large, but after departmental and other interests are

duly represented, we must have a solid body of business men strong enough to constitute a working majority if and when matters reach a voting stage. "Business government"—with due acknowledgments to you, Horatio—must be the motto of the Executive Committee. Finding work for men is mainly a business proposition, whether or not the men are ex-soldiers; and although there are many points connected with the ex-soldier which can only be elucidated by military men who would, of course, serve on the Executive Committee, yet there can be no question that when the soldier-man has had his say, and the departmental gent. has duly reported on his considered opinion, the final word must rest with the man of business. This principle is not new, its importance was recognised years ago, when Lord George Hamilton was appointed Chairman of the National Association on purpose to infuse an influential business element into the working of that body; and I am certain that those who know what that nobleman did will be the last to oppose an extension of the precedent his appointment created.

A place must be found on this Executive Committee for one or two ex-Service men. This is quite an innovation. The rank and file of the British Army has produced general

officers like the Chief of the Imperial Staff, business men like Sir Hedley F. Le Bas, organisers like the general secretary of one of the largest London hospitals, writers like Robert Blatchford and Edgar Wallace, and the only commoner who ever corrected a Lord Chief Justice of England on a point of law. But in all its history the good old British Army has never sent back to civil life a rank-and-file soldier deemed worthy of a place on any of the Committees which have sat to inquire into and report upon the condition of his class ; nor has a single ex-soldier or ex-sailor ever sat among the seats of the mighty in any of the employment societies. This was doubtless quite in order in those bygone days when it was considered so essential to teach a man his "proper place" in life and keep him in it ; but we are now in an era when ability and brains have to be taken into account, and a son of the mean streets must jostle with a son of the stately homes if work has to be done, and done as it should be. Off-hand, I could name a dozen ex-soldiers or ex-sailors who would be decided acquisitions to the Executive Committee, and I hope I shall not be accused of anything so very revolutionary or anarchistic when I suggest that one or two of these men should be on the Executive Committee in addition to

those on the Council. If this charge *is* made against me, I have the consolation of knowing that I am indicted in remarkably good company, for Sir Edward Ward's Committee recommended a similar utilisation of the services of "selected ex-sailors and soldiers who have achieved success in civil employment after relinquishing the Service."

Next, and last, we should require a Finance Committee, consisting of a representative of the Treasury, and six or seven independent financial experts, absolutely unconnected with any public department in any shape or form. The functions of this Committee would be to check waste, handle all moneys received, examine and vouch for current outgoings and income, pass accounts, and prepare balance sheets or other financial statements. But, and here we touch on a point on which the success of the whole organisation will depend, the Finance Committee must be purely actuarial and recommendatory in its functions. It must not say how much is to be spent, or how it is to be spent. The Council, usually on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, would be the supreme authority on this point. The Finance Committee would be entitled to report that it considered certain expenditure needless, and should certainly draw the immediate attention of the Executive Committee

to any items in current expenditure which might be stopped or curtailed with advantage. It would also report at once if financial commitments, either contemplated or actual, were likely to exceed available income or capital. But this is the uttermost limit of power with which the Finance Committee can be entrusted—it should not even prepare estimates of annual expenditure, and must not have the smallest control of the purse-strings when any given expenditure has to be decided upon. It will be merely waste of time and effort to form a new organisation if a strangle-hold of the Treasury type is to be the controlling power in its finance.

The temptation to outline further committees is very great, more particularly with regard to technical instruction or the land question, where the need for specialised knowledge is at once apparent. Against this we have to consider that the multiplication of committees is a retarding influence so far as work goes, and that a man will often do a thing while a committee is discussing it. Furthermore, if we have so many committees, it becomes impossible to judge any executive official by results. He is sure to contend that his committee took a line of action which proved mistaken and for which he was not to blame, and who is to say which member

or members of the committee ought to be called to account? It follows that it becomes impossible to trace failure to its definite personal source; it is no use attempting to ascertain how far unavoidable circumstances may be held to excuse the individual, and a demoralising sense of vagueness regarding responsibility creeps in with deplorable results. In addition, committees are so very apt to overawe executive officials. A man becomes afraid to do anything in the remotest degree removed from the usual rut unless it has been approved by his committee, and consequently tends to become more anxious to please his committee than anything else; knowing full well that if his department has a bad year, the broad, collective shoulders of his committee can carry the blame; and that all will be well with him provided he contrives to keep in the good books of the few men who constitute his pet committee. Therefore, I feel compelled to conclude that no useful purpose can be served by appointing any further committees or sub-committees, and that the Council, the Executive Committee, and the Finance Committee will meet with every reasonable requirement; always with the proviso that certain individuals on the Council will have special knowledge, peculiar to themselves, of each of the distinct activities

of the whole organisation, and will thus be competent to advise their fellow-members accordingly. To an extent the Executive Committee will be similarly constituted, but not to the same degree, as the dominating business element on the Executive Committee is there on purpose to act promptly on an ordinary common-sense view of matters brought before it, leaving complicated technical points of importance to be dealt with by the experts belonging to the Council.

This completes my outline, rough and imperfect, of the main organs of the new body, and my purpose will be served if it conveys a correct idea of the nature of the composition and constitution of the central features of the proposed organisation. In a volume of this character it is manifestly impossible to define every letter of the constitution, give the approximate number of members of the Council and Executive Committee, and generally lose the thread of vital points in a maze of detail, highly important in its proper place, but only suitable for production before those who may be immediately concerned in the actual establishment of the proposed society. There is, however, one outstanding point of general interest, which relates to the official standing or status of the new organisation. What is it to be?—an independent body or attached

to one of the existing State departments? There can only be one answer to this question, and that an emphatic negative so far as departmental control is concerned. If the new plan is to succeed, business men must provide most of its driving power, and we may take it as beyond argument that business men would not prove amenable to departmental methods. They would resign in disgust, there would be a big split before the society was three months old, after which, unless the business men came back on their own terms, the whole thing would drift into a departmental back-water and stagnate drowsily, while the mighty river of life and work rushed by and left it to its slumbrous fate. At the same time, it appears highly desirable that the new body should have a status other than that conferred upon it by its intrinsic qualities and the influence and position of those connected with it. Something more definite is required, and I feel sure I am not saying a word too much when I suggest that the importance of the work would justify the incorporation of the new body under a special Act of Parliament, endowing it with statutory powers, more especially with reference to finance, concerning which I shall have more to say when we reach the financial section. Such an Act would make

the society directly responsible to Parliament, would clear it from all departmental complications, and also impart a dignity and importance the value of which can hardly be overestimated.

CHAPTER XIX

COMPTROLLERS AND DEPARTMENTS

IMMEDIATELY below the Council and Committees, a number of departments, each with its own Comptroller and staff, should be formed to handle various sections of the work. The Comptrollers would be in sole and direct charge of their departments, and responsible only to the Executive Committee. Thus, and only thus, can we complete a clear chain of responsibility. The Comptroller is the man in immediate charge of actual working all day long and every day. He does as he deems best, except on general questions of policy, and, once a week, renders his report to the Executive Committee, which in turn reports to the Council. Then, if the Comptroller is not proving himself the man for his job, he must be cleared out, exactly as an unsuccessful manager would be in a business house. There must be no comfortable jobs for life in this new society. Every paid official must justify his position by results, and results alone;

and I may say at once that from the highest official down to the lowest office boy, salaries or wages must be on a scale entitling the organisation to expect nothing but first-class work. There is no room for cheap labour in any capacity whatever. Every permanent official or employee must be paid to do his work, and paid well, then if he falls short of reasonable success, he cannot say, "What else can be expected at the price?" nor can he complain if weeded out to make room for a more capable man.

We want no half-paid dudes on this society, nor well-paid ones either, for that matter, but there is always the consolation that if a fair price is paid for brains and ability, and a man fails to deliver the goods, he can be superseded without compunction; the society is under no obligation to him, and can offer a figure to someone else likely to bring in the right stamp of man. I need scarcely remark that the secretaries of the Council and Committees will be permanent officials, but I should like to point out that the Secretary to the Council must be a man who can go direct to the head of any Department of State or to the man who matters in a big business concern. This is no post for a small man, it should be filled by a man of undoubted position, ability, and influence, accustomed to handling large

questions of policy, and able to decide at a glance what reports from subordinates really mean in their relation to the whole working of the society. The Secretary of the Executive Committee should be essentially a man of business. He will be the immediate channel through which reports of every kind will pass, and must live with his finger on the pulse of the whole concern. The Secretary to the Finance Committee should be a professional accountant.

Ordinary members can be admitted on either a life or annual subscription, and regiments or other units could qualify for membership in a similar manner—such qualification enabling them to send a representative to the annual meeting. The income from this source will not be material, but the members will be valuable in many ways, not the least of which will be a general widening of direct interest in the working of the society. Regimental associations and Old Comrade societies might well be affiliated and utilised as far as possible as auxiliary means of finding employment, without, however, making the least attempt to interfere with their normal working and management. I may add that I have not overlooked the matter of branches in various centres outside London, but as these are best dealt with when their working

relation to the controlling society in London is considered, I will leave them for the time being, and pass on to (B)—the “general scope and policy” of the new body.

Generalisms are not very helpful when attempting to outline a concrete organisation; so I do not propose to write at any length on the points mentioned in (B). Roughly speaking, however, we may say that the scope of the society will take in every useful means, direct or indirect, by which employment may be obtained for the men or the men trained for such employment. Its policy should be to leave nothing undone to give to the ex-Service man that which his right in equity entitled him to expect. At the same time, it is extremely important to bear in mind that the immediate scope and policy of the new society must, as far as possible, be framed on lines which will enable the abnormal machinery created to meet with the demands of the world war to be gradually, almost imperceptibly, transformed into an effective organisation for dealing with the ex-soldier problem in normal times. This can be done if business men tackle the job, but it is completely beyond either the comprehension or capabilities of officialdom.

Concerning (C)—“working methods,”—I think it will be convenient to include under

this heading the various departments with their Comptrollers, as by describing them we can gain a useful idea of what the society should be like when in working order. Taking these departments, not necessarily in the order of their importance, we may begin with the "Advisory and Information Department." This will be purely preventive in its working. It will act on the sound principle, endorsed by every expert, that the only scientific method of handling the ex-soldier problem is by getting into touch with the men before they leave the ranks. The remarks of Edgar Wallace on this point are so very true that they may be read over again with advantage in order to instil a thorough appreciation of the supreme necessity for this spade work, and we must not forget that, to an extent, it will be just as essential for every man in the new armies and, to a degree, in the Navy as well. The first requisite is an Employment Form, of which the following may be taken as an approximate specimen :

EMPLOYMENT FORM

Unit

Regimental Number	Rank	Name
-------------------	------	------

Age	Married or Single?	(if married, state number of children under 16).
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How were you employed before enlistment?

Name and address of last employer. (If an undertaking was given to keep situation open, give particulars. Also state

whether employer has been paying any reduced wage to family or other dependants during whole or part of time covered by your soldiering.)

Are you desirous that the _____ Employment _____, London, shall enter your name on its books, or do you prefer to rely on your own efforts as regards finding employment in civil life?

Are you able to undertake work other than that which you left to enlist? If so, give particulars.

What do you intend to do for a living on your return to civil life?

What will your postal address be on your return to civil life? (State whether such address is likely to be permanent.)

Do you understand that any information you may require concerning your probable prospects on your return to civil life can be obtained by writing to "The Comptroller, Advisory and Information Department _____ Employment _____, London"?

Do you fully understand that while the _____ Employment _____, London, will do all it can to obtain employment for you, yet no absolute promise or guarantee of employment is either given or implied, and that you will be expected to do all you can to help yourself as regards employment in civil life?

I hereby certify that the answers to the above questions are correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed

Date

Present Address

CERTIFICATE TO BE COMPLETED BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER

This is to certify that No. _____ Rank _____ Name _____
enlisted _____, and is due for discharge or transfer to
the reserve _____. His previous military service was
_____. His war service is _____

He is qualified for, or in possession of, the following medals or other military decorations

His wounds are

His conduct while serving with the Colours has been such that I (a) can (b) cannot recommend him for registration on the books of the ————— Employment —————, London.

Signed

Officer Commanding

Date

Place

(*Note.*—In the event of an Officer Commanding being unable to recommend a man for registration, details should be given on a separate sheet and attached to this form. If a Commanding Officer has special reasons for recommending a man, the same should be stated as concisely as possible on a separate sheet and attached to this form.)

Possibly a slightly modified form might be issued to men belonging to the old Regular Army, asking for additional particulars regarding Army certificates of education, whether “employed” in the Service in any capacity likely to be of value in civil life; or whether in possession of any certificates for passing through a course of technical instruction. Perhaps, however, it might be better to put these questions on every Employment Form, leaving them to be disregarded by men whom they do not concern—I incline to the latter idea as tending to obviate a rather needless multiplication of forms, a point worth noting, especially as a separate and slightly modified

form may be necessary for naval use. There is one question regarding which I cannot quite make up my mind, although I inserted it on the first Employment Forms ever sent to the serving soldier. This relates to married men whose wives may possess qualifications likely to recommend man and wife for joint employment. Somehow or other—it may be more sentiment than anything else—it seemed to me that most of the men resented this question; they appeared to think that it implied an intention on their part to rely on their wives' earnings instead of their own, and I fancy it had a tendency to lower the tone of the Employment Form as a whole. In any case, its value was doubtful, as children enter so largely into the question of the employment of married couples. If there are no children, or one or two of school age at the outside, and an ex-soldier and his wife are both qualified and willing to enter domestic service, the demand for such couples always exceeds the supply, and they can be placed at any time without the least difficulty. Therefore, I am inclined to omit the question, as it can only prove of use in extremely isolated cases and to a very limited extent, and may perhaps give many men a wrong idea of the whole nature of the Employment Form.

The idea of an Employment Form is not

altogether new. I sent thousands of them to serving soldiers in connection with my *Employment Gazette*, and, as I proved to the satisfaction of a War Office Committee, the result was most gratifying. Thousands came back, most of them containing particulars of very great value relating to the men's intentions and potentialities as regards civil employment; the pity was that no society existed to make proper use of this information. I could do nothing much with it, as I was pledged not to interfere so far as placing men in work went; all I could do, and this only in the intervals of a professional career devoted to other interests, was to help them to prepare for it. The only questions of any value to me were those relating to the men's willingness to undergo courses of technical instruction, and, as soon as the Army becomes normal again, such questions must be asked afresh in new issues of the Employment Form. Obviously, however, it is no use inserting them for some time yet, for we can do nothing worth attempting to improve the technical abilities of those who will throng back to civil life in great multitudes as the war establishment is reduced.

The utility of the Employment Form is at once apparent. It tells us where we are. It shows us, *before* the men quit the Colours, how many we may expect to have to provide

for, the nature of their requirements, when they will be returned to the labour market, and what they are able to do when they are available for employment. Such information is priceless. Without it everything is mostly guess-work, and all effort little more than groping in the dark. We had nothing of the kind at the end of the South African War, and what was the immediate result? As soon as the men came back, they so besieged the offices of the National Association in Victoria Street, that a long, long queue of men waiting to register their names extended so far along the pavement outside that the occupants of neighbouring premises actually took legal action and obtained an injunction to put a stop to it as a nuisance! At least sixteen times as many men will return from this war, and if they are to come willy-nilly, as the South African men did, the central offices of any employment society had better be established behind a formidable barbed-wire entanglement. The *ultimate* result of the South African method, or lack of it, may be seen in that extract from the Report on the Poor Law quoted at the end of my first chapter. We dare not think of such preposterous and dangerous folly in connection with this war. The gradual and calculated return of men to the labour market must be decided by com-

petent experts—it will be a wicked thing if Treasury officials at Whitehall are allowed to bring establishments down with criminal recklessness by a stroke of the pen. And when men who know what the world of work is like decide that certain fixed proportions of the tremendous military establishment can be absorbed into our commercial and industrial undertakings, then, but not till then, can decisive action be taken with reference to the Employment Forms of the men concerned.

In the meantime, however, much important preparatory work can be carried on continuously. As soon as the fighting stops, an abundant supply of Employment Forms, clearly printed on thin, tough paper, should be accessible to every soldier and sailor at home and abroad due for discharge or transfer to the reserve within a fixed period, and official orders published making their completion and return a disciplinary matter. They would be forwarded and returned in bulk through the usual Service channels, and, without breaking bulk, handed over at once to the central office of the employment society. Then they would be sorted, classified, and filed for “ready reference,” not “official reference”—a distinction *and* a difference. Each one should be acknowledged direct to the man himself—a printed form of acknowledgment

would do. In the case of men not eligible for registration, or those who prefer to rely on their own efforts, this acknowledgment would be final; their Employment Forms could be marked accordingly and duly filed as "settled." Many of the others, especially in the case of trade unionists, could be answered by a stereotyped acknowledgment informing the men that their requirements had been forwarded to trade unions and employers concerned; and that they would be advised further as soon as definite information concerning their particular trade was available. The remainder would receive an acknowledgment stating that their cases were under consideration and that they would be advised further at an early date. These acknowledgments would serve this purpose,—they would show the men that their Employment Forms had been received and were not lying dormant, thus tending to keep the men interested in their futures—a most important point, and well worth the cost and trouble of addressing some millions of formal acknowledgments.

In due course these acknowledgments would be supplemented by detailed information and advice distributed in two ways: by letter in cases where the individual requirements of certain men demanded such treatment, and there will be many such cases, often entailing

the writing of several letters to one man; other men, mainly those falling into great groups of one kind of labour, will be advised and informed *en masse* by means of successive editions of a *Soldiers' and Sailors' Employment Gazette*, printed at frequent intervals, and sent out hot and fresh to the troops and seamen. This publication must be edited and written in such a style that the men will read it; and besides dealing with the main channels of labour, it should contain brightly written special articles of value to smaller groups of men. Eventually this *Gazette* will drop down to a monthly publication adapted to the needs of our normal professional Navy and Army. One word of caution—the *Board of Trade Labour Gazette*, although an excellent publication in its way, is not what the Service man requires. This was recognised by the Army Council before the war, when the free distribution of the Board of Trade publication was stopped officially because my *Soldiers' Employment Gazette* was considered so much more suited to the needs of the men.

Pamphlets, too, must not be overlooked. As soon as possible one should be prepared and distributed broadcast, giving particulars of the objects of the new employment society, a list of its branches, and such information concerning its rules and constitution as might

be valuable or interesting to the men. In more normal times, when the departmental despots-in-chief have been well and truly hammered into their proper places, pamphlets concerning State employment might be prepared and distributed with advantage. I would not, however, insult the men of the present Navy and Army with an offer of "nine jobs a year," or something of the sort, nor would I ask them to accept only the meanest and worst-paid billets the State can offer. At first, I think, information concerning railways, police, and municipal employment generally might well be inserted in the *Gazette*. I need scarcely remark that dozens of copies of this *Gazette* must be supplied free to each battalion or its numerical equivalent. Every man must be able to see it; in fact, unable to avoid it, whether or not he particularly wishes to see it. Emigration, however, might well have its own pamphlet, especially as the various Colonies are making such extensive preparations for emigrative work on a large scale as soon as peace is declared.

Lectures remain. Edgar Wallace commends them, but I don't quite see eye to eye with him in the matter. Perhaps it is because my experience has not been over-joyful. General Sir Alfred Codrington was good

enough to ask me to lecture the men of the Brigade of Guards concerning their futures,—in this world, I mean,—and I did it—twice. But I'm a paralysing lecturer at my best, and I am sure that nothing but discipline, and the discipline of Guardsmen at that, prevented the men from throwing things at me. I admit this because I want to be fair about those lectures; but, tell me, Edgar, didst thou ever see the troops really interested in lectures meant for "their good"? I never did; I always think their weekly dose of compulsory church parade is as much as they care to hear for "their good," and that serious lectures on any subject never seem to catch the boys in the right mood. Think it over again, Edgar, and I am convinced you would not, not in cold blood, turn lecturers loose upon the unoffending troops to say just what they thought would do the men most good. I am sure you are incapable of any such atrocity—it's against the laws of civilised soldiering, Edgar, and you know it.

Here's a true story in proof of my words. Years ago, when they toasted "The Queen, God bless her!" on guest nights at the officers' mess, a heavy calibre, large-bore lecturer came along every now and then to exhort the troops for "their good" in the station where they paid me for soldiering—I have

often thought since I ought to return every bob of it as "conscience money." However, this lecturer, as aforesaid, was rather a personage in his way, and the colonel, likewise the adjutant and sergeant-major, were not altogether pleased in a semi-official capacity because the Garrison Gunners could never find the range of the hall in barracks when the lecturing stunt was well alight. They did not care to march the troops up,—there are things beyond the limits of that human endurance which even military discipline can exact,—and, on behalf of comrades and self, I am sorry to say that audiences dwindled to vanishing-point. At last it was reached—absolutely it, the bird, as dead as an empty hall could kill it. Twenty minutes or so before the time fixed for the usual fortnightly lecture to commence, not a solitary Gunner was there to hear something for "his good." This was too terrible, and after a hurried powwow in the orderly room, at which the sergeant-major presided, the orderly sergeant marched forth on the barrack square and sought the defaulters, who were parading in full marching order in charge of a corporal with a liver, who was giving them a rare old time—a quick march with a turn about every four paces.

There was a useful squad, nearer two score

than one, and he of the book and stick, to wit, the orderly sergeant, halted them, formed them in line, and thus addressed them, when they had a full forty minutes of their hour to finish: "There will be a lecture in the hall, to commence in twenty minutes' time. It will last for about an hour. If you care to attend you may break off at once to get rid of your packs and change into clean fatigue dress."

This was putting it very diplomatically. For a second or two not a man spoke or moved. Then a hardened old veteran of the canteen, a man with a sheet of entries as long as your arm, a face like teak, and a thirst unmatched even in the "Shiny East," raised his bloodshot, bleary, beery eyes, and said in a voice husky with the driest intonation that ever quavered in the tones of a wistful, waiting "watler," "Lectures! 'Strewth! No, not for it, sargint. Let's git on wiv ther jankers."

And they did, crushing the gravel remorselessly until the clock above the guardroom struck the full hour of their punishment.

CHAPTER XX

EMIGRATION AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION

THE Emigration Department would be mainly informative and advisory, as the Land Department would handle men who might be trained for emigration on lines similar to those governing the Overseas Training Colony established by the Hon. Rupert Guinness at Woking. It is well known that after the war the Colonies intend to boom emigration to the utmost, and anticipate a rich harvest among men who have joined the new armies from a variety of occupations to which they will never return; soldiering having given them a permanent distaste for indoor work. Personally, I do not think this feeling will be quite so strong as the optimistic emigration officials imagine. No doubt it is decidedly pronounced among townsmen who taste outdoor life for the first time in military training camps where they have plenty to do, an abundance of food, and no worry regarding wages. But after these chaps have done

their spell in the trenches, much of the polish is rubbed off the simple life under the open sky, and the fleshpots of town make an irresistible appeal. In spite of this, I feel sure that emigration will appeal to very large numbers of men who have served in the new armies, and will continue to appeal to a proportion of those who leave every year in normal times. Reasonable encouragement should be given to these men to emigrate. The Colonies have given freely of their bravest and best, and it will be base ingratitude if our authorities do not render assistance towards promoting the judicious emigration of ex-soldiers. The commutation of pensions, for instance, will have to be reconsidered with extreme care, and the Emigration Department of the new society should be charged with the recommendation of commutation in cases where a lump sum will enable a man with a family to start life afresh in a new country under conditions which give him every chance to make good ; and I see no reason why selected single men should be denied a similar concession.

It works out like this. A man, perhaps slightly disabled but free from organic disease, or an ordinary pensioner of some forty years of age, cannot live on his pension, but has a good chance of acquiring a competency if allowed to commute the whole or part of his

pension for a lump sum sufficient to give him a fresh start in a colony. This is sound enough in theory, but fails in practice unless very great care is exercised to ascertain that the prospect of a competency is as certain as human forethought can make it. There is only one really satisfactory solution to this problem. Selected men must be sent out under official supervision and tested in the Colony in a training settlement set aside for ex-soldier settlers on probation. If the men do well, their pensions can be commuted, and their wives and families sent out. One of the Canadian States tried a scheme on these lines with very satisfactory results, and the idea should be carried out all round when the emigration of pensioners is resolved upon, and the commutation of pensions reconsidered.

Other men, who are free when the Army has finished with them, should be encouraged to emigrate to those Colonies which offer them the best prospects, preference being given to Colonies which specialise in meeting the needs of the ex-soldier. In effect, the Emigration Department would be mainly a militarised edition of the Emigrants' Information Office, but rather more elastic and enterprising, asserting itself with vigour when necessary, and always ready to expend considerable pains on the individual. In a wide

sense its policy should be to foster and encourage emigration to Colonies willing to take the average run of men, and bank down the aspirations of those who have no use except for the cream of our manhood. In other words, it is but just that these grand young nations should have a fair slice of the family joint; but they must take fat and lean together, they have no right to expect to be helped to titbits any more than the mother-country has a right to expect them to take uneatable leavings. Let them cut and come again by all means, but they should take away with them a fair ration, not the primeest cuts, which should be shared all round, to say nothing of a reasonable portion reserved for the home table. If they care to help themselves to just what they want and nothing else, all well and good—there is no law against it, nor should there be one; but they cannot expect to be helped to pick and choose in this way. The Employment Form will be most useful to the Emigration Department. It will enable the men to have independent and expert guidance before they leave the ranks, and should often prevent them from making an ill-judged choice through attempting to pick their unaided way through a varied and plentiful assortment of emigration advertisements and literature of a most attractive description.

Upon the whole, however, it would not appear to be wise to foster emigration by any excess of artificial stimulus. The thing to do is to allow it to take its natural course. After all, when the average long-service soldier has spent the best part of his life in various parts of the Empire, it is undeniable that he has a preferential right to settle down in the old country for the remainder of his days. It is not quite the straight thing that a man of this stamp should be expected to start life afresh in a Colony, although, of course, if he thinks he would like to emigrate, and emigration will improve his prospects and position, he ought to be given whatever facilities are necessary to enable him to put up a good show as a colonist. This is all very well, the thing which rouses my ire is that men of this stamp should find it so hard to live in the land they have guarded that they have to clear out of it.

Another point connected with the emigration of ex-soldiers is indicated by the following extract from *The Unemployable and the Unemployed*, by J. B. Paton, M.A., D.D. Our author says: "Let us not forget that while this emigration continues, it is frequently the finest blood of our race that is drawn from our veins and goes to enrich other countries, whilst the weaker and those who are less fit for labour remain with us to reproduce after their kind."

These are weighty words, and having regard to the wastage of fit lives caused by the world war, we must think more than once before concluding that wholesale emigration will be the best means of dealing with the men who are left when the fighting is over.

At this stage it is hardly possible to write much about technical instruction in the Army in normal times, but there can be no doubt that the question will come up again with increased force when the professional overseas Army settles down to its customary routine after the war. At the moment, however, the main point to bear in mind is that the Technical Instruction Department must be run on such lines that it will be able to take over this important work in due course. The gist of the argument in favour of technical instruction for soldiers in normal times is that we cannot pension more than a small percentage of our professional Army, that the majority of men so pensioned cannot live on their pensions, and that in any case the supreme necessity for a reserve means the transfer to civil life of thousands of men every year. In the past we have done nothing worth mentioning to prepare these men for the labour market, although the necessity for such preparation has been insisted upon by every expert. Funds, of course, have been the main

difficulty—trust the Treasury officials for *that* ; but, in addition, differences of opinion as to *modus operandi* have tended to keep the thing back. Colonel Dauntensey, better known as Colonel Harkness in connection with technical instruction, is a great enthusiast on this subject, and a first-class practical expert into the bargain. When he commanded the Royal Marine Artillery at Deal, he brought the technical instruction of his men to such a state of perfection that his plans and ideas were justly regarded as in all respects excellent. Unfortunately, however, the personal factor was held rather too cheaply. The colonel knew his subject as a capable head lad in a racing stable knows the points of a horse, and all would have been well indeed if every Commanding Officer in the Army had been up to the form of the colonel. But this was too much to expect. The average Commanding Officer, although benevolently enough disposed towards technical instruction for the men under him, says, quite fairly, “ In these times it is as much as I can do to keep my men up to the mark as part of a fighting machine. I can’t be bothered about teaching them to mend shoes or make furniture. This is not my masterpiece ; turn the right people on to it and I will give them all the help I can in a disciplinary and general sort of way ; but

don't ask me to do the collar work—I'm much too busy with a few thousand other things."

One cannot argue against that, and, after much thought and first-hand investigation, I have arrived at the conclusion that technical instruction will have to be divided into three phases. First, by means of a Gazette and attractive booklets, the men, even young soldiers, should be kept in mind of the fact that some day or another they must return to civil life, and that it is up to them to prepare for it. Next, when the men have settled down to steady duty soldiers, correspondence classes, adapted to the needs of the soldier, should be instituted, and, with the help of Army school-masters and a few specialists selected from those who had passed previous classes "with honours," much useful knowledge of a theoretical nature could be mastered by the men. Certain subjects, such as shorthand, book-keeping, languages, and so forth, could be taught completely in this manner, and other subjects which have their indispensable practical and manual side would, after the maximum of theory had been imparted by correspondence, be dealt with finally in technical schools established in large military centres to which men would be sent for instruction when pending discharge or transfer to the reserve. I have tested this scheme

thoroughly so far as a Gazette is concerned, with results which so gratified the authorities that my scheme for correspondence classes received the highest official support in every sense except a monetary one. I think the classes would have succeeded, but the war broke out while they were still in the preparatory stage in most cases, and in any event they were but a step towards an end which can only be reached by a considerable and remunerative expenditure of public money. I say remunerative, because, if technical instruction in normal times is carried out as it should be among the rank and file, we shall have less need of expensive recruiting "attractions," and, in addition, the average citizen will save as a rate-payer far more than he will expend as a tax-payer, for proof of which see, yet again, that telling extract from the Report on the Poor Law.

I need scarcely add that, as far as naval experts might deem advisable and practicable, some similar scheme for the technical instruction of serving sailors might be introduced; but the need is not nearly so great as it is in the Army.

CHAPTER XXI

MORE NEW DEPARTMENTS

Two big departments now demand attention. They are the Skilled Labour Department and the Unskilled Labour Department. Their functions are manifest from their titles. Men will be classified as skilled or unskilled according to information supplied on their Employment Forms, and dealt with by the Department concerned. I might fill pages of this book with a mere catalogue of the trades and callings these departments will have to keep in touch with, and I might easily write another book bigger than this if I attempted to detail the relation between each means of earning a living and the position of the ex-soldier. Suffice it to say that these departments will have to work, especially during the first rush after the war, in close co-operation with the Labour Exchanges, and must also keep in sympathetic touch with trade unions. This gives me an opportunity to say that never, under any circumstances, will the new body

take sides in labour disputes. No man registered on the books of the society should ever be sent to take the place of a striker. It would be madness to think of taking sides in this way. Master and man must be left to settle their own disputes, and when peace returns the society can do its best to place men in the usual manner.

A Press and Advertising Department is the next essential, greatly as the bare idea may shock the old fogies. My notion is, that the more publicity the new body has the better its chance of fulfilling its objects. Newspaper and poster advertising on a patent medicine scale is not to be thought about for a moment, although a fair amount of each will have to be done. Well-written circulars to employers, kept alive by "follow-up" letters, and supplemented by canvassers, who should be trained ex-soldiers to a man, would occupy perhaps the bulk of the time and attention of this department. As for the press, that will help readily enough, but not if the newspaper man is kept twiddling his hat on the door-mat and told to wait until the publication of the annual report before he can be given any copy. That is not the idea, not a bit like it. This society should work with daylight streaming over all its machinery. If the Treasury won't grant funds, don't send a private memo

to some departmental wallah, but publish all the facts hot and fresh in the papers. If certain avenues of employment are not as open to the men as they should be, don't "regret" it in an obscure corner of an official report, but let a live press agent tell the people all about it in the columns of as many papers as possible. Keep public interest alive in the thing, don't allow it to drop into a sedate and dignified society which has its full-dress powwow once a year, turns on a big gun or two to deliver carefully prepared speeches, publishes a report which the man in the street never sees, and then jogs on until its next annual beanfeast. That method has been tried and found wanting during the past; take it away and put it in a museum with a label on it, and give the new society every chance to stick its light well on top of the basket. Plenty of interesting happenings could be supplied almost daily by a press agent worth his salt, and the camera men provided with subjects worthy of their skill. Nothing should be left undone to secure a "good press" first, last, and all the time; and if perchance any paper has comments to make which may not stroke some department or other just the right way at the moment, don't try to *strafe* that paper—it never pays. Reason with it sweetly and publicly, give its

representative a special interview, and the publicity will be all the more valuable for a flavouring of legitimate controversy. We want no jiggery-pokery, hole-in-the-corner officialdom, but clean, straight work in the open which all may see and say what they please about. Make no mistake about it. Because this new body has to be financed by the State, it by no means follows that it is to take unto itself the secretive airs of a typical Department of State. That pose will never do; such affectation would impair its virility, favour the growth of the red-tape fungus, give its officials heads as big as the Oval gasometer, and speedily reduce the whole organisation to a mere burlesque of what it ought to be.

Our next item is a State Employment Department, devised to ensure a maximum of State employment for the ex-soldier. This must be run on a principle I will illustrate by an incident taken from life. I was once behind the scenes of a travelling show, and I saw a gelding of uncertain age and temper led by a man who had a straw in the corner of his mouth, beady eyes, tightly compressed lips, and jaw muscles which bulged big and twitched a little when he shifted the straw. The gee showed a lot of white in its eyes, curled back its lips to display what fine teeth it had for

man-eating purposes, and flattened its ears every now and then as if planning blue murder on a Hun scale. The man looked at the horse, and I stopped and looked at both of them.

"Can I sell 'im to yer, guvnor?" asked the man.

"No, nothing doing."

"Well, what are yer lookin' at 'im fer?"

"I was wondering how you manage the brute. Tell me, how do you do it?"

"S'pose the tip will be worth the price of a wet, guvnor?"

"Oh yes."

"Sure yer ain't buyin' 'im, guvnor? 'E's as strong as a 'ouse."

"Quite; I couldn't do with him at a gift."

"Orl right, I'll tell yer wot yer wants ter know. Most times I can marster 'im wiv a big stick. When I carn't, I jist bites 'is bloomin' ear."

Exactly, and by the same token the State Employment Department will have to fix its departmental teeth into the official ear of those who control employment under the State, and chew steadily. Nothing else will produce the desired effect. Argument, reasoning, expostulation, and any amount of "representation through the usual channels" only wastes time and energy. The correct

method is to draw up a definite programme, outlining to a man and a billet what jobs ex-Service men should have under the State, and then worry, worry, worry in a full blaze of publicity until the thing is done.

I have not forgotten the Royal Navy. A Naval Department has been in my mind all along, but it is very difficult for an ex-soldier to presume to suggest to the Senior and Silent Service what ought to be done for the "handy man" on his return to civil life. I feel certain that an ex-naval officer as Comptroller, assisted by a staff of men who had served in the Navy, would soon form and carry out most effective plans of his own, directed mainly towards placing men in suitable work afloat, but never overlooking the chance of picking up a good billet through the special efforts of any other department. The main necessity for a Naval Department is, as I have already stated, to prevent the overlapping sure to result from the creation of an entirely separate organisation for the Navy; and also to give to seamen the full benefit of a highly organised and State-financed society established on purpose to give the men a fair chance on their return to civil life.

To meet with the peculiar requirements of the world war, we should require, temporarily, a Special War Department. Roughly speaking,

this department would deal with those who did not quite fit in any other department, and would specialise in the direction of preventing men from drifting into the danger zone mentioned in an earlier chapter. Exceptional cases of all kinds would come within its scope, and it would have very important and delicate work to perform for men of a certain grade whose careers had been diverted or even spoiled owing to their military service. There will, I fear, be many of these, and even when every allowance is made for the intelligence, adaptability, and independence of their class, much, often of an advisory nature, can be done to improve their prospects by means of a department of the kind I have mentioned.

Next, we require a General Department which will be responsible for the bulk of the routine clerical work. It will examine and classify Employment Forms when first received, pass them to departments concerned, and file them when finally disposed of, together with all correspondence and departmental comments regarding any particular man. Reports of all kinds, except financial, will be prepared by this department, the ideal aimed at being to throw the minimum of routine clerical work on comptrollers and staffs of executive departments. The General Department should take for its motto—"Abandon

red-tape all ye who enter here," and should be run on the very latest and best systems devised to obtain results of a satisfactory nature without overmuch entering and re-entering in tome after tome, each as heavy as a man can shoulder with comfort. Some adaptation of the card-index system would be infinitely better; an expert could devise it without any difficulty, and it should be worked on lines permitting quick reference to original documents with as little trouble as possible. Reports should be diagrammatic rather than tabular when prepared for the information of the Executive Committee or the Council, and presented in such a way that detailed information of the exact working of the society is perceptible at a glance. In fact, the Comptroller of the General Department should be able to say in a few minutes exactly what any other department in the building had definitely accomplished up to the day previous, supply the number of outstanding cases connected with any department, and generally have at his finger-ends everything which in the past has been dug out with great pains for annual reports. During the first rush after the war, this department would have to employ a large amount of labour of a temporary kind, a circumstance which should enable it to select highly capable workers for its permanent staff.

Our list is completed by a Branch Department, the importance of which is too obvious to need emphasis. For a start, branches all over the country can be established readily enough by simply taking the existing organisation of Lord Derby's recruiting scheme, and asking these good people to do the work. They are sure to do so, as they will not be unmindful of their obligations towards the men they enlisted; nor to those who joined up from their part of the country before Lord Derby's plan was launched. In big centres, of course, allowance will have to be made for salaried permanent officials. In working, although the central body will exercise an advisory and co-operative control over its branches, yet it should give the utmost scope to any local variations and ideas, provided they do not infringe the constitution of the society. The permanent officials will be paid direct from the head office, and will be judged by results. The head office should also send special canvassers to districts which appeared likely to benefit by a visit from these energetic gentlemen, and would arrange public meetings, local advertising and press campaigns, in short, do everything possible to prevent branches from becoming slow and matter-of-fact. The pre-war idea of making recruiting officers responsible for branches should be

scrapped, although these officers should serve on local committees and do all they can to help in a general way.

Mention of branches brings us to the first and, I fear, not the least of the many ills we may expect to discover owing to the mistaken policy adopted when the care of the disabled was handed over to a separate body. We are sure to find branches of the Statutory Committee in full working order in every important centre, and it is difficult to see how anything can be done except by establishing fresh branches to meet the needs of normal ex-soldiers. Think of what clashing this means all over the country, what wasteful duplication of office and routine work, and dissipation of energy, through distinct channels which should be concentrated on behalf of ex-soldiers as a whole. We shall find employers asked by one body to find work for the disabled and tackled by another body to give able-bodied ex-soldiers employment; and as business men do not wish to be bothered more than they can help when they have work to give away, it is certain that the main result will tend to make employers fight shy of both bodies. Furthermore, the numbers of real workers on behalf of the men will never be excessive in any particular locality after the glow of the war has died away, and the present position will compel the two bodies to compete

with each other for the services of these voluntary workers who will have the success of either scheme very largely in their hands. It is a great pity that this should be, but it is done now, and although we cannot change it, yet that is no reason why we should not regret it.

All these departments mean money, to say nothing of the cost of the central executive. Whatever is needed must be provided by the State, or the ex-soldier's right in equity cannot be met. The question now is—how much? Sir Edward Ward's Committee estimated for sixteen thousand a year in normal times. I suppose we may conclude that the Army now is at least sixteen times as large as it was when Sir Edward's Committee issued its report, which gives us two hundred and fifty-six thousand pounds, say three hundred thousand pounds in round figures, and to be on the safe side, after allowing for preliminary establishment expenses, the new body should have fully four hundred thousand pounds, to be expended during its first year of working. The second year will be much lower, of course, and the annual charge will decrease until the figure mentioned in Sir Edward's report might cover it, provided the cost of permanent military establishments for technical training is included as a separate charge in the ordinary Army estimates.

After the first Government grant, the society would, under statutory powers obtained in the meantime, frame its own estimates and present them direct to Parliament, although as a matter of departmental form they would have to be shown as a separate item in the estimates for the combatant forces. This is the main reason why the new body should be incorporated under a special Act of Parliament, for, most assuredly, it would be doomed to speedy financial starvation if Treasury officials were allowed to suggest to Parliament what the annual grant should be. That would mean "No funds available" for useful and necessary work waiting to be done in all directions, and inert impotence would creep over the society long before it was old enough to feel the effects of senile decay. The Council and Executive Committee would know what the society required, and as tax-payers and men of business they would not present a swollen estimate. Then in due course the grant could be either passed or pared by the House of Commons, and whatever happened the country would know exactly who was responsible for it.

The society must also be responsible direct to Parliament in every other respect. It cannot exist if it is to be controlled by any Department of State. If this society is to

make good, it must be kept absolutely clear of the clutches of those permanent officials in State Departments who stand between executive workers and the House of Commons, and it will be well indeed if the precedent established in this manner leads to such an extension of the principle that the Treasury middle-man is invariably reduced to his proper condition of clerkly responsibility. He has posed as the autocrat of the national money-bags far too long—thus taking unto himself powers which are the most cherished prerogative of Parliament.

CHAPTER XXII

SOME FINAL POINTS

MY plan is finished, it is there for all the world to see, and without any affectation I can say that no one is more conscious of its shortcomings than I am. Regarding departmental detail, for example, I have been compelled to write paragraphs where chapters, long ones, could only have summarised points of organisation, and a whole book might well have been filled with details. This volume will not suit that honest, blunt soul who must have everything made as plain to him as a cut from the joint, two vegetables, and a slab of suet pudding. He will look askance at it, protest that he cannot see how this, that, and the other is likely to work, and indicate his preference for something simpler, such as a book in which men's names can be written in a fair, round hand, and a small office where employers can come and fetch the men if they want them.

I feel for such a man. He represents a

class very numerous in this country, which atavism has endowed with a mentality attuned to the spacious times of our forefathers, when life was more simple, and the world went very well indeed at low pressure. But we live in a complex and highly specialised age, and the ex-soldier problem must be handled in accordance with the spirit of the times. Our recruiting experiences during the war will serve to illustrate my point. At first, the Kaiser was such a splendid recruiter for us that we had more men than enough. Then the pinch came, and we had recruiting speeches, literature, and posters galore, all more or less on pre-war lines, all plain enough to be seen through at a glance, and typically muddle-headed in their lack of co-ordinated efficiency and general failure to understand that something very different was really required. Then Lord Derby brought out his plan, with its numerous classes and well-organised machinery admirably designed to recruit the men. What happened? Success, up to a point; and complete success was only missed because the scheme was too belated. If it had been in operation at that time when the War Office was raising the height standards and doing all it could to retard the rush of men which was overwhelming it, practically all the manhood of the country would have joined up.

But men, once turned away, were very hard to recruit later on. They had screwed their individual courage up to the sticking-point, and when they found standards "above their heads," or most of the regiments "closed" for recruits, they cooled down into a state of apathy which, in many cases, only the push of compulsion would ever remove. There was no reason whatever why a scheme similar to Lord Derby's should not have been in vogue before the war was a month old. The authorities had to look no further than Camberwell for a pre-war working model of a recruiting scheme, with canvassers complete, which had proved astonishingly successful when recruits were difficult indeed to obtain. The passing of men into the Reserve after one day of Colour service is not new, we did it with railwaymen years ago, and the grouping and subsequent calling up of recruits could easily have been adapted from whatever modification of any of the continental systems seemed most suitable to our needs. But no, nothing of the sort was done until it was too late to save the voluntary system. Why? Because officialdom, reinforced by a Parliamentary Committee which thought it had nothing much to learn about recruiting, clung to hackneyed ideas and antiquated notions while Directors of Recruiting were changed

as an angler changes his flies on a "chuck and chance it" day, and continued to dally about with a mass of disjointed effort until, when at last a man and a plan came along, the golden opportunity had fled never to return.

In official circles I know exactly how my scheme will be received. Financial big-wigs will regard it as the maddest thing ever talked about since Don Quixote clapped a basin on his head and had a brisk and merry round with any who made bold to say it was not a golden helmet; and others who control State employment will be a little irate, but more amused than anything else, and will depute a clerk to look up all the departmental precedents which can be urged against the employment of ex-soldiers in the manner and to the extent I claim. They will hold these in reserve, and produce them with a comical air of dignified infallibility if my views meet with enough public support to flutter the innermost dovescots of officialdom. Others will be inclined to take my project more seriously, and will soon discover a thousand and one reasons why the scheme is fantastic, absurd, unprecedented, and quite unworkable.

I know those good people. They thrive to perfection in official positions both in and out of Government offices. They are honest, industrious, well-meaning gentlemen, but they

never have a working thought beyond the official groove in which they earn their bread and butter. Privately, in connection with their respective hobbies, they may be as enterprising as could be wished, but in an official capacity they haven't enough initiative to tilt the whiskers of a tom-cat, or imagination enough to detect the proximity of eggs when shells are about. I have met these gentlemen many a time and oft. At the end of the Boer War, feeling certain that the official employment guide was not complete enough for the men, I set about writing something better. While collecting my materials, official after official told me that I was wasting my time, that the ground was already covered, and that the men would never appreciate a book of the type I had in view. They gave me this advice, the information I wanted, and, very often, a pitying smile when we parted. However, I stuck to my book, completed it, and in due course the late Lord Roberts honoured it with a commendatory foreword expressed in anything but formal terms. Eventually, a copy was to be found in every reading-room and men's library throughout the Army, and I sold over twenty thousand copies direct to the men. Time passed, and it was conveyed to me privately that the War Office so liked certain aspects of my volume

—*How and Where Ex-Soldiers can get Work*—that it was deemed advisable to incorporate some of the ideas in a forthcoming issue of the official instructions relating to civil employment. Nothing in the nature of an obvious “lift” was intended, but enough was contemplated to make the officials concerned think that it would not be quite the game to go ahead without my formal consent, which I gave readily enough at the first private request, but not without a passing thought that such should be the fate of a volume so derided before it was born.

My Soldiers' Employment Gazette followed, but before the first number appeared, although a War Office Committee had recommended such a publication, and it was supported in most influential official quarters, yet there was a strong undercurrent of pessimistic criticism. Some of the employment societies were not a bit keen, they could not be bothered to prepare reports once a month for insertion in the *Gazette*, they did not see how it could be made interesting to the men; and one official told me to my face that, although the first number or two might be all right, yet the *Gazette* could not last, because there would be nothing to write about. However, the *Gazette* appeared, ran without a break for over three years, and was in full swing when the war broke out.

After it had been running for rather more than a year, a funny thing happened. When the success of the paper was assured, one of the societies in question began to think that it was such a good thing after all that it ought to be taken up and made much of. A distinguished General saw me with reference to the matter, and we parted on a rather curious point. We chanced to discuss the opinions of Officers Commanding as regards the right kind of publication, and I replied that as my *Gazette* was paid for by cheques signed by these officers, I did not fear their judgment, yet at the same time I considered it improbable that they knew very much about the type of paper the men would read, and that a *Gazette* filled with items after the mind and manner of the Commanding Officer would not be popular among the men. The General agreed to an extent, but he would have it that the average Commanding Officer knew what his men read, to which I replied, with all due respect, that, in my humble opinion, the average Commanding Officer, although a first-rate judge of the military and physical qualities of his men, knew no more about their reading than he did about their praying, if they ever did any. That parted us, on the friendliest possible terms, and I should not have mentioned the affair but for the light

it throws on the success of another "impossible" project directly connected with the ex-soldier problem.

From this it must not be inferred that I consider my plan perfect. Far from it. I regard it as but little more than a rough pointer in the right direction; but, and this is the only point which really matters, I am sure that my plan is correct in principle, however faulty and incomplete it may be in detail or even outline. And, as Ruskin says so beautifully, "It is only possible to answer for the final truth of principles, not for the direct success of plans."

My principle is based on the incontrovertible truth that the ex-soldier's right in equity demands a complete revision of every past and present method of dealing with his condition, and a full recognition of the financial responsibilities of the State towards whatever plan may be decided upon. If my plan is not good enough, no one would be more pleased than I to see it improved out of existence, but I must insist upon the supreme and urgent need for a complete and well-thought-out scheme devised to meet with the pressing needs of the men, for the disabled are with us in ever increasing numbers, and it will take a long time to perfect an organisation capable of dealing with the situation when the boys come home.

We cannot do it after the war, it demands immediate attention if we are to avoid a terrible muddle. There is not the slightest need to wait. I could name half a dozen gentlemen in London who could meet at "a way-side inn," clear the ground, and give the thing a preparatory start in a very few hours ; and, I may add, the temptation to print their names is very great.

One thing must not be overlooked. If this principle is not recognised in the time and manner I have ventured to outline, nothing can prevent it from asserting itself at its own time and in its own way. It cannot be shelved—it is too big, too human, is this question of the future of our ex-soldiers (a word I always write to mean ex-sailors as well without pausing to reiterate irritating distinctions between the two). If nothing is done before the end of the war, and then the question is fooled with, it is certain to enter the domain of party politics. One party or another will make the case of the ex-soldier in general and the disabled in particular a plank in its platform, and we shall be told that "Every vote cast for the Blues means more work for the ex-soldier," or asked to "Vote for X, who will see that the disabled get better pensions." This will be bad, very, in a direct sense, but much worse indirectly, as it will tend to make the serving

soldier deeply interested in party politics, a contingency every good constitutionalist must view with apprehension, as we know that when the little British Army does take a hand in the political game it goes far beyond its legitimate sphere and leaves a nasty mark on current affairs.

Organised labour will not leave this problem alone—I am sure of that. When I was working on the earlier chapters of this book, I had a most intelligent young soldier billeted on me for a night, and I discussed the whole question with him. He had no doubt whatever regarding the future of the men. “If,” said he, “officialdom tries any of its pranks after this war, my union alone would paralyse recruiting over half England, and that would be the least we would do.”

So far, however, organised labour has not shown its teeth on behalf of the ex-soldier, no doubt because no one wishes to disturb the national unity during the war. But the Labour Party has not been asleep, far from it. We learn from the daily papers that the Joint Board of the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee, the General Federation of Trade Unions, and the Labour Party Executive have met to consider demobilisation and the industrial position of disabled soldiers and sailors during and after the war.

Among the points which have been dealt with by a sub-committee are :

Formation of a committee to direct the orderly utilisation of labour and resources after the war.

Registration of sources of employment; organisation of surplus labour so as to prevent congestion in any area.

Attempt to secure that, during the interval between discharge from the Service and employment, the men should be supported by the State.

Encouraging municipalities to undertake work suspended during the war; utilising opportunities for works contemplated by the Development Act.

It was felt that the Government should be pressed to appoint a statutory body without delay, and that the attention of the Prime Minister should be drawn to the report presented by Sir George Murray's Committee, with a view to the recommendations in that report being put into operation.

That idea of supporting men while they are waiting for work wants careful pruning,—some fellows might make a profession of waiting,—but in all other respects the programme is as sound as could be desired in principle.

I have ventured to outline a statutory body; it may not be quite what the Labour

Party would like in every respect, but I do not think they will kick so very hard at any of my proposals, nor, for that matter, do I consider it probable that any political party will, in these times, be hostile to a well-meant effort on behalf of the men. The worst of it is, however, that private Members of Parliament are so absolutely out of it while the war lasts. All the power has passed into the hands of Cabinet Ministers, who are very largely the mouthpieces of those permanent officials and "responsible members of the Civil Service" who would never tolerate a scheme like mine in ten thousand years. But the country at large, as well as the private member, has had very nearly as much from these people as can be endured even in time of war. Business men, in the House of Commons and out of it, are feeling that officialdom has far too much power in the land, and that it is high time something was done to limit the powers of those permanent officials who work in a mysterious way their blunders to perform. Well, here is an opportunity to fight them on an absolutely new question, and on ground which the business man might have picked for the contest. We want a new organisation to deal with the needs of the ex-soldier; it must be the newest of the many new things we are to find in that new world which will dawn when

peace is declared, and it is up to business men to see that they get it.

There is only one way to do it, and that is by making it abundantly clear to officialdom that the nation is in earnest on the subject, and does not mean to leave it to "departments concerned." We want agitation in Parliament, in the Press, and elsewhere until the thing is accomplished. Constructive agitation, that is. This is not the time to shout nothing but "Down with this, that, or the other." We want to build up, only knocking down so far as may be necessary to clear our site, and I hope those who think I am right will support me, write to me, tell me what they think, and thus bring into being the definite nucleus of reform on behalf of those who are fighting our battles ashore and afloat.

Finally, I must yet again emphasise the danger of delay. If we wait until this question begins to answer itself we can expect nothing except the gravest consequences. If we have large bodies of ex-soldiers crystallised into a formidable whole by a nip of bitter adversity, I do not care to think of what the country may experience. This brings us to things we can only see through a glass darkly, and I hope we shall never have a better view. But I can remember a procession of unemployed ex-

soldiers demonstrating in Trafalgar Square after the Boer War, and two or three years back a National Society of Ex-Service Men was formed which skeered officialdom more than a little, although the society never really found its feet. These straws show us which way the wind may blow after the war, and prove that departmental diddling and delay are both dangerous and unjust. Surely, instead of waiting for these things, and then spending money and effort recklessly to quieten agitation, it would be infinitely preferable to prove to the world that although we made many mistakes through lack of foresight during the war, yet we mean to see that everything possible is done in good time to help the men who fought in it.

Time presses. We have not a moment to waste if that Pensions Appeal Board and statutory organisation for ex-soldiers are to be in being when they are sorely needed. I cannot do better than conclude with the stirring words of the Minister of Munitions: "I wonder when it will not be too late. Ah, fatal words on this occasion! Too late in moving here, too late in arriving there, too late in coming to this decision, too late in starting with enterprises, too late in preparing! In this war the footsteps of the Allied Forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of

'too late,' and unless we quicken our movements damnation will fall on the sacred cause for which so much gallant blood has flowed."

Are we to be "too late" when the war heroes come back? That is the question. We shall be if we leave the matter in the hands of those who have been "too late" in so many of the grim moves of this war. But there is yet time if the nation rouses itself, makes a full call on the brains and abilities of its business men, its labour leaders, and all those whose minds and methods are free from the taint of departmental routine. These are the men we want to get ready for the return of those who have fought, and I am sure they are ready and willing enough to "do their bit"; but they must not be quieted by the soft words of those "competent members of the Civil Service" and the like who, not content with their lion's share in "muddling through" the war, are resolved to a man that they must be allowed to make an even greater mess of cleaning up after it.

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